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XXI.—SYMBOLISM, ALLEGORY, AND AUTO-
BIOGRAPHY IN *THE PEARL*.

In 1904 I ventured to write an article entitled "The Nature and Fabric of *The Pearl*,"¹ in which I advanced opinions at variance with those previously held on the subject. Since then have appeared a new edition of the poem, five new English translations of all or a large part of it, and several articles on various aspects of the work.²

¹ *Pubs. Mod. Lang. Ass.*, xix, 154-215.

² Ed. C. G. Osgood (*Belles Lettres Series*), Boston, 1906; trans. (in part) S. Weir Mitchell, N. Y., 1906—reprinted, with additions, in *The Bibelot*, Portland, Maine, 1908; trans. G. G. Coulton, London, 1906; trans. (in prose) C. G. Osgood, Princeton, N. J., 1907; trans. Marian Mead, Portland, Maine, 1908; trans. Sophie Jewett, N. Y., 1908. Professor Gollancz has announced a reprint of his edition and translation, to appear in *The King's Classics*.

See also C. S. Northup, *Mod. Lang. Notes*, xxii (1907), 21 ff.; G. G. Coulton, "In Defence of 'Pearl,'" *Mod. Lang. Review*, II, (1907), 39 ff.; I. Gollancz, *Cambridge History of English Literature*, I, (1907), 320 ff.; J. J. Jusserand, *Literary History of the English People*, 2d Eng. ed., I, 351, n. A. Brandl, *Anfänge der Autobiographie in England*, in *Sitzungsberichte der Kgl. Preuss. Akad. der Wissenschaften*, xxxv (1908), 731-2; K. L. Bates, *The Dial*, Dec. 16, 1908, pp. 450 ff.

In no one of these documents has my point of view with regard to the symbolism, allegory, and autobiography in the poem been fully accepted. To be sure, the chief part of former, fanciful speculations regarding the author's life and incentive to composition have not been repeated;¹ but all who have recently *written* about the poem have clung tenaciously to the pleasant belief that *The Pearl* is a personal lament of the poet for a daughter of his own, and therefore strictly elegiac and autobiographical. This belief would be fairly harmless if (because of the primary stress always laid upon it) it did not inevitably obscure the true significance of the poem; but on this account it should not be allowed to establish itself more firmly without frank protest.

If I have been tempted to write again about *The Pearl*, it is because I am afraid that in my previous article I did not make my argument clear enough for those who are unacquainted with mediæval literature, and who could hardly be expected to judge of its conventions without more illustration; and because I recognize that my attitude on certain possibilities was not sufficiently explicit to preclude misunderstanding on the part of scholars whose opinion I highly respect. Besides, I should like to point out certain plain errors in recent discussions of the subject. I have gone over the whole matter again, reluctantly but conscientiously, considered every serious criticism carefully, examined the poem anew from different aspects, and if my further studies have not resulted in any considerable change in my point of view, but only in a somewhat different statement of it, this has not been because I have begun

¹ Save in the case of Professor Gollancz, who has revived his "hypothetical biography" of the poet in the *Cambridge History*, I, 330 ff.

with *parti pris* or proceeded without an open mind. I must confess, to be frank, that I have restudied the poem with scholarly method, though doubtless this will be again imputed to me as a reproach; but my main object has been to examine it as a work of pure literature, which does not, however, mean impressionistically, looking only on the surface, or without historic sense, as if it were a creation of to-day. I write “in defence of *Pearl*” as “a lover of the poem,” and I earnestly pray, as Chaucer did long ago of *Troilus*:

“And red whereso thou be, or elles songe,
That thou be understande, God I beseche.”

I.

Before coming to the main questions to be discussed in this article—Symbolism, Allegory, and Autobiography in *The Pearl*—I would ask the reader’s indulgence while we consider together at some length the meaning of the opening stanza of the poem, which is naturally regarded by critics as giving its key-note. A correct translation of this stanza, I venture to say, has never been printed; and upon the misunderstanding of the text by the various translators has rested part of the false bias they have received themselves, and conveyed to every new reader, concerning the nature of the elegiac and autobiographical elements in the poem.

The opening stanza is as follows:¹

“Perle—plesaunte to princes’ paye
To clany clos in gold so clere—
Oute of Oryent, I hardyly saye,

¹ There is no punctuation in the manuscript.

Ne proued I neuer her precios pere.
 So rounde, so reken in vche araye,
 So smal, so smoþe her sideȝ were,
 Queresouever I jugged gemmeȝ gaye
 I sette hyr sengeley in syngl[e]re.
 Allas! I leste hyr in on erbere;
 þurȝ gresse to grounde hit fro me yot.
 I dewyne, fordolked of luf-daungere,
 Of þat pryuy perle wythouten spot.”

These lines quite literally mean:

“ Pearl—pleasant to princes’ pleasure
 To (en)close cleanly in gold so clear—
 Out of the Orient, I hardly say,
 I never found its precious peer.
 So round, so radiant in each array
 So small, so smooth its sides were,
 Wheresoever I judged gay gems,
 I set it singly in uniqueness.
 Alas! I lost it in an ‘ arbor ’;
 Through grass to ground it went from me.
 I dwine, pierced with love’s power,
 For that privy pearl without spot.”

It will be observed that, if my interpretation of these lines is correct, there is no indication in them of what the poet’s real loss is. We may surmise that the pearl he *represents* himself as losing is not to be taken literally, but we are as yet given no hint of what it may betoken. The author’s plan is to let the symbolism of his poem disclose itself slowly.

The first mistake that has frequently been made in translating this stanza is to regard “princes” in the first line as a singular noun in the possessive case, the prince mentioned being taken to refer to the Prince of Heaven—whereby a picture has at once been evoked of Christ rejoicing in paradise in the possession of a pearl that He

has received. The early translators of the passage, Dr. Morris¹ and Professor Gollancz,² rendered the line accurately, though Professor Gollancz remarks in a note (p. 107) that "the phrase probably implies 'for the Prince's (i. e., God's) delight.'" Dr. Osgood, on the other hand, frankly capitalizes the noun in his text and glossary,³ and says that it means Christ, though admitting that "perhaps as a secondary meaning any prince is implied." In his (prose) translation, Dr. Osgood writes unhesitatingly: "O Pearl, delight of Christ the Prince," introducing the word Christ to establish the supposed meaning.⁴

Dr. Osgood was apparently led into error by the note of Professor Gollancz just quoted,⁵ and by his references to five refrains in the last section of the poem, especially to the last lines of all:

"He gef vus to be His homly hyne,
Ande precious perle₂ vnto His pay"—

"May He grant us to be servants in His house, and precious pearls unto His pleasure"—to which passages Dr. Osgood also refers in his notes. But both scholars have failed to notice that these supposed parallels are not exact;

¹ *Early Eng. Allit. Poems*, London, 1864, etc., EETS., 1, p. ix.

² *Pearl*, London, 1891, p. 3.

³ Edition, pp. 53, 170.

⁴ The translations of Mr. Coulton ("pleasant to princes' pay") and of Miss Mead ("pleasing to prince's will") do not reveal very clearly what the author's ideas on the point were. Miss Jewett's, on the contrary ("Pearl that the Prince full well might prize"), shows agreement with Dr. Osgood's rendering, with still further straining of the sense.

⁵ Be it said, however, to Professor Gollancz's credit, that, as he himself emphasizes (p. 107), he "carefully avoided" translating it so in the text, giving as his reason that "the allegory should reveal itself gradually."

for in no instance in them is there any possibility of misunderstanding the meaning, a preceding "my" or "that" always definitely determining the sense: Pearl in paradise speaks of "my Prince" (1164); the dreamer, of "that Prince" (1176, 1188, 1189)¹—whereas it lies in the very intent and structure of the poem that "pearl" in the first line should be purely literal, and in the last purely symbolical.²

But if the first line is misleading in most of the translations, the second is still more so. The phrase "to clanly clos" has troubled editors and translators persistently, though it is in fact only a "split infinitive," meaning "to (en)close cleanly."³ Dr. Morris (p. 108) made the "to augmentative, meaning "very"; cf. "most neatly set in gold so clear" (p. ix). Professor Gollancz writes in a note (p. 107): "lit. 'too cleanly enclosed' (i. e., for earthly existence)"; but in his translation he puts "so" ("so deftly set in gold so pure"), apparently not because

¹ Cf. the description of Lady Meed in *Piers Plowman* (Text A, passus II, ll. 11-12):

"Alle hir fyue fyngres . weore frettet with rynges,
Of the preciousest perre (gems) . that *prince* wered euere."

Dr. Osgood himself cites (pp. 54, 53): "The gentileste jowelle ajuggede with *lordes*" (*Morte Arthure*, 862); "Coral yced wiþ cayser and knyht" (Böddeker, *Altengl. Dichtungen*, 145. 7).

² See below, pp. 612, 623 ff., 636.

³ "The author uses "close" (with silent "e") as an infinitive in the following line: "þur, kynde of þe kyste þat hyt con close" (271). There is extreme freedom in the scribe's use of final "e" in the text. The past participle of the verb is "closed" in *Cleanness*, l. 310 ("a cofer closed of tres, clanlych planed"); also "clos" in l. 12 ("if þay in clannes be clos þay cleche gret mede"). In the *Destruction of Troy* (ed. Panton and Donaldson, EETS., 1869) it is *closet* (*closit*), 268, 1509, 1634; in the *Wars of Alexander* (ed. Skeat, EETS., ES. 47, 1886) it is *closid* (*closyd*), 383, 1378, 2912.

he regarded the “t” as a scribal error. Dr. Mitchell has “right cleanly housed in gold so clear”; Mr. Coulton: “so daintily dight in gold so clear”; Miss Jewett: “so surely set in shining gold”—all of these being variants of one of Professor Gollancz’s interpretations, but conveying very dim meaning. It was reserved for Dr. Osgood to depart altogether from the text and to put in his translation something totally at variance with what the author wrote: “O Pearl, delight of Christ the Prince; now safe, afar, in his clear regions of pure shining gold”!

It is an interesting study to see how Dr. Osgood arrives at this extraordinary result. Having discussed Professor Gollancz’s interpretations of “too” and “so” (the infinitive being always taken for a past participle), he remarks (p. 53): “But *clanly clos* is a common alliterative phrase and *clanly* may thus be used here rather for alliteration than meaning. *To* may thus belong to the more significant *clos*, the sense being ‘too fast (though decently) enclosed for my present happiness.’ Or *clanly* may mean ‘completely,’ in which case *to* could modify it.” Furthermore, Dr. Osgood is troubled about “the intended figurative meaning of the whole line”¹ and decides that “*golde*

¹ In support of the “intended figurative meaning” discovered in this line, Dr. Osgood quotes as follows a passage from the *Love-Rune* of Thomas de Hales (*Old Eng. Miscellany*, ed. Morris, EETS., 1872, pp. 93 ff.):

“þe ymston [Mary] of þi bur,
He is betere an hundred folde
þan all þeos in heore culur.
He is idon in heouene golde,
And is ful of fyn amur.”

I was the first to bring the *Love-Rune* into connection with *The Pearl*, to show the striking resemblance of the latter, in substance and phraseology, to a purely allegorical poem. But I am at a loss to understand how Dr. Osgood could gloss, as above, the “gem-

is probably the coffer, *i. e.*, Paradise." "The line," he adds, "may contain also a secondary allusion to the maiden's tomb The poet may have provided costly sepulture for the child." This is bad enough; but what shall we say of the imaginative interpretation of the line by Miss Mead, who translates it: "set all-too sweetly in clearest gold," and suggests (p. xvi) that here the "glory of gold" of the maiden's "shining hair" is "tenderly hinted at"?

In this instance, as in many others in the interpretation of *The Pearl*, one must keep one's mind clear or one will soon cease to separate what the poet says from what appreciative critics read into his lines. Here is no word at all about a golden tomb for a maiden, or the glorious gold of her shining hair. No maiden has as yet been men-

stone" of the poem as "Mary," when it stands for "maidenhood." Note the following lines:

"þis ilke ston þat ich þe nemne
Mayden-hod icleoped is.
Hit is o derewurþe gemme;
Of all oþre he berþ þat pris,
And bryngþ þe wiþ-vte wemme
In-to þe blysse of paradis.
þe hwile þu hyne witest vnder þine hemme
þu ert swetture þan any spis."

"Hwat spekstu of eny stone
þat beoþ in vertu oþer in [grace],
Of amatiste, of calcydone,
Of lecturie and tupace,
Of iaspe, of saphir, of sardone,
Smaragde, beril, and crisopace,
Among alle oþre ymstone
þis beoþ deorre in vyche place."

Note that the author compares one gem—an allegorical virtue, Maidenhood—to various others, and says that, in his opinion, it surpasses them all.

tioned. So far we have nothing more than the plain statement (in the true style of the lapidary, as we shall see): "Pearl is a gem that princes delight to set in clear gold." The second line is not "vague," as Dr. Osgood believes, and it has no "intended figurative meaning," or "secondary allusions."

The third and fourth lines read literally:

"Out of the Orient, I hardily say,
I never found its precious peer."

This Professor Gollancz translates:

"From Orient lands, I durst avouch,
Ne'er saw I a gem its peer."

which, save for a possible mistake, regarding the connection of the opening clause, conveys the right meaning. But other translators put "her" for "its," and most introduce "pearl." For example, Dr. Osgood writes: "Truly no pearl of the Orient have I ever found her peer in price." As a matter of fact, the statement probably is not that the girl (who has not yet been mentioned), or any particular pearl (for, apparently, the author has not yet got beyond the general), surpasses either any gem, or any other pearl of the Orient—but simply, that the author believed Oriental pearls to be peerless among valuable gems.¹ The

¹I have written "a possible mistake." It may be I who am mistaken. The opinion I have reached, after long consideration of the passage and especially in the light of the lapidaries (on which see what follows), is that the author begins with statements concerning the gem pearl in general and then shifts in line nine (rather abruptly, to be sure) to statements concerning the particular pearl which he had *in mind* from the beginning to use as a symbol. On the contrary, it may well be held that he is speaking of this particular pearl throughout the stanza, and the "were" in line six

limitation, “out of Orient,” was probably made to indicate that he did not refer to native British pearls, which, then as now, were not prized like the perfect, lustrous pearls of the East.¹

The next point to be noted is the use of the possessive pronoun. In the first stanzas we find in the unique manu-

and the definite “hyr” (it) in line nine would support this interpretation; yet I cannot make the opening lines fit such an explanation comfortably. There is evident difficulty whichever view one takes, and my argument does not depend on the correctness of either. The important fact I wish to establish here is that there is no mention of any *maiden* in any part of the stanza.

According to my view, “out of Orient” is equivalent to “when out of the Orient,” *i. e.*, the author simply makes here the regular limitations of “Oriental pearl” in his superlative statements about the gem. This limitation is constant in mediæval literature. In *The Pearl* itself, the girl is said to wear a “crown of pearl Orient” (255), and we read of “precious pearls of Orient” (82). Cf. pp. 598, 602, 653 n. 1, 660 f. According to the alternative view, the translation of Dr. Osgood (as quoted) would convey the correct sense, except for the unjustifiable use of “her” in the line.

¹Pliny says in his *Natural History* (Bk. IX, ch. 57): “It is a well-ascertained fact that in Britannia pearls are found, though small, and of a bad colour” (trans., Bohn Library, II; see note, p. 437). In Robert Greene’s *Orlando Furioso*, 1594, p. 235, we read of “rich Orient pearl,” “more bright of hue than were the Margarets that Cæsar found in wealthy Albion.”

Messrs. Kunz and Stevenson write, in *The Book of the Pearl* (N. Y., 1908, p. 160): “In the twelfth century there was a market for Scotch pearls in Europe, but they were less valued than those from the Orient. (See Nicolai, *Anglia Sacra*, II, 236; *Alberti Magni Opera Omnia*, ed. A. Borgnet, Paris, 1890, v, 41) An ordinance of John II, King of France, in August, 1355, which confirmed the old statutes and privileges of goldsmiths and jewellers, expressly forbade mounting Scotch pearls and Oriental pearls together in the same article, except in ecclesiastical jewelery. (“Orfèvre ne peut mettre en oeuvre d’or ne argent parles d’Ecosse avec parles d’Orient, si ce n’est en grand joyaux d’église”—See *Histoire de l’Orfèvrerie-Joaillerie*, Paris, 1850, p. 146; De la Borde, *Emaux*, Paris, 1852, II, 437).”

script of the poem (probably a copy of a copy) *her* (*hyr*) and *hit* used indiscriminately, which is simply due to the fact that the word "pearl" was feminine and *her* was correctly used, yet *hit* was perhaps more natural as applied to an inanimate object. On this point Professor Gollancz wrote, much to his credit (p. 107): "I have carefully avoided using the feminine pronoun in my rendering of the opening of the poem; the allegory should reveal itself gradually It must be borne in mind, however, that the feminine pronoun would not strike a mediæval reader as conspicuously as a modern one; but at the same time it is noteworthy that the poet frequently uses the indefinite *hit*, *e. g.*, in ll. 11; 4. 5; etc." Dr. Osgood points out (p. 54) that in *Cleanness* (1117-1128) "the fem. pron. only is used of the pearl, and that too without any evident personification." He thinks this "remarkable": "the sudden change from the neuter pronoun (cf. 13. 41) indicates an imperfect identification of the symbol with the object symbolized." The fact is: either *her* or *hit* could be used of the gem pearl, but only *her* could properly be used of the girl Pearl.¹ The girl is plainly not spoken of here; and yet—this is the point I wish now to emphasize—almost all recent translators have used the feminine pronouns *she* and *her*, as if there was no question that the girl Pearl was here definitely referred to, whereas, I repeat, no maiden of any name or nature has as yet been mentioned.

Following this same principle, all translators have made an effort to transform a general description of the gem into one of a girl. Literally, lines five and six read:

¹ If *hyt* is used in ll. 283-4 and 377 it is because the symbolism of the lost gem pearl is definitely in the poet's mind; cf. the use of *ho*, *hyr*, etc., in stanzas 14-19.

“ So round, so reken (radian) in each array
 So small, so smooth its sides were.”

No one has ventured to change altogether the first adjective, though “ round ” is hardly a flattering term to apply to a girl. Dr. Mitchell, in perplexity, wrote “ rounded,” hinting at “ well-rounded,” an adjective of commendation for a girl of accomplishments. “ Reken in vche araye,” being more indefinite, has given more scope to the translators. The phrase probably means “ radiant in every way,” or “ ray.”¹ It has been translated:—Gollancz: “ comely-shaped withal ” (this “ withal,” a mis-translation of “ vche araye,” was probably to militate against the disagreeable impression of rotundity); Coulton: “ so comely every way ”; Mitchell: “ in such rare array ”; Mead: “ so purely radiant still ” (the “ still ” is obscure, if it means anything); Osgood: “ radiant and unchanging (a prose translation has not the excuse of verse for foisting in an epithet “ unchanging ” without any justification in the text; yet in his glossary Dr. Osgood translates: “ in vche araye, *at all times* ”); Jewett: “ so radiant to mine eyes ” (again the personal touch without any warrant).

Line six reads: “ so small, so smooth her (its) sides were.” This remains with literal exactness in Gollancz and Coulton, save “ her ” for “ its,” the latter being necessary to accord with the usage of modern English. Mead has for the first adjective “ small of mould ”; Jewett, “ small to hold ”; Osgood, “ tender ” (why?). For “ smooth sides ” Mitchell has “ smoothen comeliness ”; Jewett, “ so smooth she seemed ” (meaning?—nothing

¹ By a slight emendation of the text. Dante emphasizes the little spheres “ che insieme Più s’abbelivan coi mutui rai.” Cf. “ full many a gem of purest ray serene ”; “ ryal ray ” (l. 160).

about sides); Osgood, "slight of form" (why?—Dr. Osgood quotes passages in romances of ladies who had small waists). What efforts to make the statement in the line suitable to a girl when it was only intended to apply to a gem!

These adjectives give the staple of description of a pearl "withouten spot," the obvious qualities of its beauty—round, radiant in every way (or ray), small, with smooth, sides. In lives of St. Margaret, as Dr. Osgood points out,¹ the pearl is described as "candida, parva," "little and round also," "round and small"; etc. In *Cleanness* we read of the pearl: "For ho (she, it) schynes so schyr þat is of schap rounde." In *The Pearl* itself, the symbolism of the pearl of great price is partly based on the fact that it is "wemleȝ (spotless), clene, & clere, & endeleȝ rounde, & blyþe of mode" (737). Because of the parallelism between the gem and the girl, which the author tries later to enforce, he is led to write of the latter as "so smoþe, so smal, so seme slyȝt" (190), a line which Dr. Osgood translates thus strangely: "so soft, so slight, so fair and winsomely tender" (p. 10).

If there had been any difficulty about the meaning of the first six lines, it should have been ended by the straightforward statement in lines seven and eight, which sum up the preceding description:

"Wheresoever I judged gay gems,
I set it (the pearl) singly in uniqueness."

Professor Goliancz, with all his care to avoid personal touches by anticipation, nevertheless here introduces "my" before pearl; likewise Dr. Osgood: "At all times when I

¹ Pp. xxxii, 54; cf. Pliny, Bk. ix, ch. 56, on the merit of pearls.

have appraised bright gems, *her* I have set apart and alone"; and Miss Jewett:

" Among all jewels judges wise
Would count *her* best *a hundred fold*.

In these renderings the author's emphasis on his own particular point of view is neglected. He is simply stating his personal preference. He does not assert (in the words of the *Morte Arthure*) that the pearl is "the gentileste jowelle ajuggede with lordes," but simply states first that "princes" were pleased to set pearls in gold, and then that, *as for him*, he thought the pearl unique among gay gems.¹

We remember in this connection the notable passage in *Cleanness*, a work pretty certainly by the author of *The Pearl*:

" Perle praydes is prys, þer perre is schewed,
þaȝ hym not derrest be demed to dele for penies.
Quat may þe cause be called, bot for his clene hwes,
þat wynnes worschyp abof alle whyte stones?
For ho schynes so schyr þat is of schap rounde,
Wythouten faut oþer fylþe ȝif ho fyn were."²

¹ One is reminded of the charming *ballade* by Froissart, with the refrain: "Sur toutes fleurs j'aime la marguérite." For example:

" Sur toutes fleurs tient on la rose belle
Et en après, je crois la violette,
La fleur de lis est belle et la perselle,
La fleur de glay (*glaieul*) est plaisante et parfette
Et plusieurs sont qui aiment l'ancolie,
Le pyomer, le muquet, la soussie;
Chacune fleur a par soi son mérite;
Mais je vous dit, tant que pour ma partie,
Sur toutes fleurs j'aime la marguérite."

Parady d'Amours, ll. 1627 ff. (ed. Scheler, *Oeuvres de Froissart*, I, 49); modernized Faguet, *Lit. Hist. of France*, N. Y., 1907, p. 104.

² *Early Eng. Allit. Poems*, ed. R. Morris, London, 1864, EETS., I, ll. 1117 ff.

Of course, putting the pearl first among gems was a matter of individual taste. Lydgate thought the ruby surpassed all jewels:

“ þe rubie briȝt
Of al stones in beaute and in siȝt,
As it is know, haþ þe regalie.”¹

But in this he was merely following the lapidaries. For example, in that of Philippe de Valois, we read: “ Li rubis est vermax et vaint totes les merveilles de pierres. Li livre nous dient que li gentilz rubis fins et nez ce est li sires des pierres, ce est la jame des james, et il a la vertu des pierres precieuses par desor toz.”²

In the *Lapidaire en Vers*,³ we read:

“ L'auctoritez, qui nous aprent
Don ruby ou nus ne se prent
De biauté, d'estre gracieus,
Dist que c'est li plus precieus
Des masles et fumeles pierres
Des douze dont Dieux fu crieres
Quant eria toute creature.

.

Ensi com nous avons apris
A li rubys la signorie
D'oir en oir et d'ancisserie”

(ll. 261 ff.)

“ Par son (Christ's) command-
ment fu mis
Au col Aaron li rubys,
Li sires des pierres clamez,
Li prisiés rubys, li amez,
Li gentis de joiant coulour,
.
Nule pierre a li ne se prent:
De biau tans allume et esprent
Sa coulor; biaus est, clers et fins
De sa biauté n'est nule fins”

(ll. 877 ff.)

Nor should it be forgotten that the author of the *Love-Rune* compares the allegorical gem Maidenhood, which he celebrates, with other precious stones,⁴ and decides:

¹ *Temple of Glas*, ed. Schick, London, 1891, EETS. ES. LX, ll. 259 ff. Henry V wore in his helmet at the battle of Agincourt the famous ruby of the Black Prince, to whom it is said to have been given by Dom Pedro, King of Castille, after the battle of Najera, near Vittoria, 1327 A. D.

² L. Pannier, *Les Lapidaires Français*, Paris, 1882, p. 295.

³ Pannier, pp. 246, 264.

⁴ See above, pp. 591-2.

“ He is o derewurþe gemme,
Of alle oþre he berþ þat pris.”

As is well known, “ lapidaries ” were extremely popular in the Middle Ages.¹ If we bring the opening stanza of *The Pearl* into connection with these, we note several points of interest which help our understanding of the poem:

1. Like the lapidaries in general, our poem opens with the name of the gem to be described. In the first French

¹ The Latin poem *De Gemmis* by the Abbot Marbodus (Marbœuf), who was made Bishop of Rennes in 1081, and died c. 1124, was the basis of all the mediæval lapidaries. Edited Migne, *Patr. lat.*, t. 171, col. 1725; Beckmann, Göttingen, 1799; (with translation) C. W. King, *Antique Gems*, 2nd ed., London, 1866, pp. 389 ff. Full information concerning the poem in Pannier; cf. p. 20: “ Le lapidaire de l'évêque Marbode n'eut pas seulement un immense succès dans sa rédaction originale latine, il ne resta pas seulement sous cette forme le grand poème pédagogique du moyen âge sur les pierres précieuses, et, jusqu'à la fin du XVI^e siècle, le manuel classique des écoles de pharmacie; on le traduisit très-anciennement dans presque toutes les langues de l'Europe occidentale.”

It may be noted that the author of *The Pearl* shows (in *Cleanness*, 1124 ff., Gollanez, p. xxviii) knowledge of the treatment of pearls as gems, giving a receipt for restoring their lustre when they grow dim (cf. Pliny, Bk. ix, ch. 56):

“ It becometh never the worse for wear,
be it ne'er so old, if it remain but whole.
If by chance 'tis uncared for and becometh dim,
left neglected in some lady's bower,
wash it worthily in wine, as its nature requireth:
it becometh e'en clearer than ever before.”

He also refers (ll. 553-4) to another gem by way of comparison:

“ As the bright burnished beryl ye must be clean
that is wholly sound and hath no break.”

In the *Lapidaire* (Pannier, p. 123) we read:

“ Bericle li Englois le claimment
Qui mout le prisen et mout l'aimment.”

lapidary there are sixty sections, and in forty-seven of these the gem treated is the first word. The following passages will serve as examples:¹

“ <i>Saphir</i> est bels e cuvenâble, En déi de rei resplendissable.”	“ <i>Esmaragde</i> par sa culur Veint tutes chiose de verdur.”
“ <i>Calcedoines</i> est pierre jâlue Entre iacint e beril meâine Mult est e preisée e amée, E de riche gent renumée.”	“ <i>Beril</i> est en Inde trouvée, E par sis angles est formée Pur avoir en granniur clarté, E si enn a granniur bâlté.”

In order to enforce the likeness of such descriptions to the opening of *The Pearl*, I would quote at greater length from the statements concerning the sapphire in a Cambridge (Anglo-French) version of the *Lapidaire*.²

“Saphirs est bons et bauls en dei,
Si l'aiment mult li plusor roi,
Kar il est cler, et sa bealté
Semble le ciel et sa clarté.
En Libye en unt une manire
Que il trovent en la gravire . . .
Huem les apele par figure
Les seinz de gemmes par bon dreit,
Pur les vertuz que avoir deit . . .
Cil plaist a Deu ki chastement
Le porte sanz ordeiemment.
Pur pais faire est merveilluse;
Sur tutes gemmes precieuse . . .
Bien li comant que il net seit
Cil ki sur li porter la deit.”

It will be observed how the author explains that the sapphire (which is often joined with the pearl) is beloved by kings to wear on their fingers, particularly because of

¹ Pannier, pp. 39, 41, 45.

² Pannier, p. 149.

its clearness; it is found in the Orient (Libya); it is called symbolically (*par figure*) "the saint of gems," and for certain purposes (*e. g.*, "to make peace") is "precious above all gems"; because of its "virtues," it should be worn "chastely" by those who are "clean" (*net*).

The oldest lapidary has the following lines *De Margaritis*:¹

"En Inde naist en un peisán
Une pierre ke perle a num.
Unio à num pur ce k'est sule . . .
Blanches e cléres sunt les perles . . .
En Inde naist e en Britanie
K'on apele la primeraine . . .
Mielz vaut la clere ke l'oscurie.
Li bon perrier ancienúr
Tindrent la ruunde a meillúr."

Of course, the etymology "Unio, the unique gem"² is incorrect, but it was evidently current in the fourteenth century, and it may have strengthened in the poet's mind the idea of the "uniqueness" of the pearl. In any case, not only because each pearl was found singly, but also because of the gem's qualities, he put it "singly in uniqueness."

2. In the Cambridge version, where the description of the origin of "perle blanc" is lengthened, and emphasis laid on the pearls to be found "en Bretagne la loée, Qui Engleterre est clamée," we read:

"La conche clot quant la mer vient,
Avec le flot sa voie tient
Içoe ke conceü avra
Piere blanche devendra:
Mult par est bele sa blanchor,
En or a mult bele color."

¹ Pannier, p. 65.

² Pliny, Bk. ix, ch. 56.

Here the last line is particularly to be noted; for it states the proper setting of the pearl.

Our poem has, however, closest connection with the allegorical *Lapidaire en Vers*, beginning “Cil qui aimment pierres de pris,” where, it is interesting to observe, the last line of the section describing each stone frequently states the setting it should have.¹ For example: 1. “En *or* doit jagonce seoir”; 2. Topaz—“David dit que seur *or* doit estre”; 3. Emerald—“En bon *or* assise la port”; 4. Ruby—“Et si la doit on en *or* mettre”; 5. “Li saphyrs doit seoir en *or*”; 6. “Jaspes doit seoir en *argent*”; 7. “Lygures doit en *or* gesir.” Even so, in the second line of our poem, the author indicates that pearls should be set “in golde.” We are not concerned with whether we should make such a remark to-day or not; it is plainly like the comments of the mediæval lapidary.²

3. It should be noted further that in the *Lapidaire* (1363 ff.) there is an orderly enumeration of the twelve stones that St. John saw in the foundations of the New Jerusalem, such as occurs in stanzas 84-85 of *The Pearl*, as well as parallels of the descriptive adjectives used. For example, “the topaz twin-hued” is explained (without going to Bede) by the *Lapidaire*:

“Plus est de coulor esmerez
D’or et d’asur est coulorez” (757-8).

One is also struck by the similar constant references in the *Lapidaire* to St. John and the Apocalypse, which form

¹ Similar statements appear in the prose lapidary prepared for Philippe de Valois (Pannier, pp. 294, 297).

² It will be remembered, from the passage above quoted (p. 591, note), that the allegorical gem “Maidenhood” in the *Love-Rune* was “set in the gold of heaven.”

the refrain of stanzas 82-86 in *The Pearl*, where the enumeration of the twelve stones is found. And the word “devise,” which recurs in connection with it (“as deuysez hit þe apostel John,” etc.) is repeatedly found in the same connection in the *Lapidaire*.¹ Critics make much of the absence of references to the apocrypha, etc., in *The Pearl*; the situation is the same in the *Lapidaire*.

4. Finally, it may be mentioned here that the general likeness of part of *The Pearl* to the lapidaries might prepare us at once to expect allegory in the poem, “significations” of any and every sort, some to our minds very strained and far-fetched. In the mystical *Lapidaire en Vers*, the twelve stones of Aaron’s breastplate, and therefore of special Scriptural emphasis, are treated first with reference to their “nature,” and afterwards with reference to their “significance.”

“ Mult ont vertus, mult senefient,
De par Dieu vertueuses sont.
Pluisors senefiances ont,
Mais lor significations
Est droite predication,
Qui bien s’en vauroit entremetre ” (676 ff.).

To illustrate this important point, a few examples may be given:²

¹ Cf. “La bible et Sains Jehans nous dit” (708); “Sains Jehans en l’apocalypse Nous dit” (730); “Ce nous dist li verais legistres Sains Jehans (810); “Sains Jehans dist tout a delivre En l’apocalypse son livre” (837);—“Devise Sains Jehans,” (1445); “Li lapidaires nous devise” (269); “Ci com li livres nous devise” (647); “Que je vous devisai avant” (844); “Ce nous devise” (1231); “Trop i averoit long devis” (1418); etc.

² Pannier, pp. 258 ff.—“Surtout le but de ces œuvres, c’est de faire passer, sous le couvert des idées reçues sur les pierres, des exemples de morale et d’édification et en même temps d’initier les âmes au mysticisme” (p. 209).

La senefiance dou rubys.¹

“Moyses en son livre escrist
 Qu'il senefia Ihesu Crist
 Qui vint en terre cheminer,
 Son obscur peuple enluminer;
 Lor tenebres enlumina
 Quant il en terre chemina
 Sains Jehans meisme le dist
 De la venue Ihesu Crist
 Qui dou diable fu hafe.
 Au peuple redist Isaïe
 Ciaus qui en tenebres estoient
 Lumiere et grant clarté verro-
 ient.
 Diex, qui enlumine le monde,
 Premier en la tire seconde
 Le ruby metre commanda;
 De sa clarté tout amenda.

Au col Aaron sans doutance
 Fu mis en tel senefiance,
 Sains Jehans en sa glose dist
 Que le bel ruby pas ne vit
 Ou haut fondement precieus,
 Car li dous vrais Diex glorieus
 Est entre ses amis tous jors,
 Nus ne set nul de ses sejors:
 Une heure en cor, autre en
 milieu;
 Ainsi n'a point de propre lieu.
 Qui de quant que il a l'ounore
 Et Dieu et sainte eglise aoure
 Ne puet estre deshonorez;
 Partout doit Diex estre aourés.
 De quant que il a chascun donne
 Et de quant qu'il nous aban-
 donne.”

La senefiance dou topasce.

“Oh nueme fondement fut mise
 De la pardurable cité
 Dont saint Jehans dist verité,
 A ses dis se fait bon amordre;
 Ce senefia la nueme ordre
 Des angles qui en cele vie
 Vivent, n'ont de nule autre
 envie:

Ce est la vie renommée
 Se n'est rois ou roïnes non,
 Car tout sont coroné par non.²
 Ou il n'entre ne nez ne née
 Rois doit mult volentiers gar-
 der
 Le doit thopasce et esgarder:
 Bone ramembrance li done

¹ Pannier, pp. 265-6; ll. 889 ff.

² Cf. *Pearl*, 445 ff.:

“ The court of þe kyndom of God alyue
 Hatz a property in hyt self beyng:
 Alle þat may þerinne aryue
 Of alle þe reme is quen oþer kyng,
 & neuer oþer þet schal depryue,
 Bot vchon fayn of oþerez hafyng
 & wolde her corounez wern worþ þo fyue
 If possyble were her mendyng.”

Qu'il gart a la haute corone.
 Tuit cil qui pluisors pierres
 gardent
 Tous jours ou thopasce resgar-
 dent,
 Plus tost que as autres veües
 Et plus i tornent lor veües;
 Et savez que ce senefie?
 On doit regarder a la vie
 Qui durra adès, que c'on face,
 Que on voit Dieu en la face.
 Li thopasce tels com il naist
 Est mieudres, mais tant pas ne
 plaist;

Ne puet chaloir de li polir.
 Par ce ne puet on pas tolir
 Sa force, mais por cele vie
 Qui n'a cure d'estre polie
 De richesse d'or ne d'argent
 Le dist saint Jehans a la gent,
 Et dist: plus vaut la plus
 petite
 Joie de cele vie eslite
 Que ne fait trestout li delis
 Qui est dedans cest monde mis.
 A cele vie fait bon tendre;
 Mult i devroit chascuns en-
 tendre.”

(762 ff.)

La senefiance dou saphir.

“Li saphyrs nous ramentoit
 l'estre
 Et l'estage dont cil s'aprochent
 Qui au verai soleil atouchent,
 C'est Jesu Cris; cil qui em-
 prennent
 Dieu a amer forment se pren-
 nent
 An celestial regne querre
 Et moult entendent au con-
 querre;
 Et ausi con la gloire haute
 Mest nostre veüe en defaute,
 Que nus ne puet ciel deviser
 Ne la hautesce raviser,
 Ausi nous faut entente et voie
 D'entendre a la gloire et la joie

Dou ciel qui tant par est joi-
 euse,
 Et douche et digne et glorieuse.
 Sains Jehans vit secondelement
 Ceste pierre ou haut fondement
 Ou ele fu seconde mise:
 La seconde vertu promise
 Senefia, c'est esperance,
 Et por ceste senefiance
 Fu mis en la seconde tire
 D'Aaron; la saphyrs nous tire
 Et ramentoit la grant hautesce
 Dou ciel, que par notre peresce
 Perdons a avoir; peu i tendent
 Li plusor, et peu i antendent.
 Diex! si peu i antent mais nus!
 Et si n'est nule joie plus:
 C'est la joie qui tous jors dure.”

(932 ff.)

These passages are perhaps unnecessarily long for the erudite; but those who are ignorant of the absurdities of the pseudo-science which passed muster in the Middle Ages, and the mystical allegorization of almost everything in the Bible then commonly indulged in by dignitaries of

the Church, need visible demonstration to convince them that such things could be. It is hard for us moderns to take the allegorical lapidaries of the fourteenth century seriously; but that we must do, if we would enter into the mood of the author of *The Pearl* when he composed his work. Chaucer refers to "the Lapidaire"¹ as a familiar treatise on the "fynest stones faire"; though there is nothing to indicate exactly what version he used. But our author, it is evident, was zealously Christian, and, like churchmen of all degrees in succession before him, he saw "sermons in stones" and pointed out their mystical significance. It is not in the method of thought itself so much as in its subtlety of development and in its artistic setting that *The Pearl* differs from the lapidary. But how great is the gulf between them in excellence!

To illustrate further the opening line, and to show the contemporaneousness of the poem, it may be explained that *The Pearl* was written in what has been called "the pearl age" because of the bewildering popularity of the gem at that time. Recent writers² have made clear that pearls were then particularly favored by *princes*, that many fourteenth-century rulers in Europe had superb specimens in their crowns,³ regalia, or adornment, that they gave pearls away to their peers in lavish abundance, while at the same time they made enactments to prevent the use of the gem by common people.

¹ *House of Fame*, ll. 1350 ff.

² G. F. Kunz and C. H. Stevenson, in their work of rare value and interest, *The Book of the Pearl, The History, Art, Science, and Industry of the Queen of Gems*, New York, 1908.

³ The crown of Alfred the Great, that of Edward the Confessor (reproduced as the official crown of England), and the present crown of Scotland (used at the coronation of Robert Bruce's son, David II, 1324-76) were all largely decorated with pearls (*l. c.*, pp. 418-19; cf. p. 15). Cf. Pliny, Bk. ix, ch. 58.

In the *Travels of Marco Polo*, which the author of *The Pearl* probably knew, we hear a good deal about pearls as well as other jewels, as the ornaments of princes, in the East. For example, in Bk. III, ch. 20,¹ we read of the pearls in the province of Maabar:

“The greater proportion of the pearls obtained from the fisheries in this gulf, are round, and of a good lustre Independently of the tenth of the pearls to which the king is entitled, he requires to have the choice of all such as are large and well-shaped; and as he pays liberally for them, the merchants are not disinclined to carry them to him for that purpose.

“The king is honourably distinguished by various kinds of ornaments, such as a collar set with jewels, sapphires, emeralds, and rubies, of immense value. He also wears, suspended from the neck and reaching to the breast, a fine silken string containing one hundred and four large and handsome pearls and rubies on each arm he wears three gold bracelets, adorned with pearls and jewels; on three different parts of the leg, golden bands ornamented in the same manner; and on the toes of his feet, as well as on his fingers, rings of inestimable value. To this king it is indeed a matter of facility to display such splendid regalia as the precious stones and the pearls are all the produce of his own dominions.”

In Bk. II, ch. 38, we read also that in the Province of Kain-du “there is a large lake of salt water, in which are found abundance of pearls, of a white colour, but not round. So great, indeed, is the quantity, that, if his majesty permitted every individual to search for them, their value would become trifling; but the fishing is prohibited to all who do not obtain his license.”²

If we come, however, from the Orient to England in our poet's time, we find that there also pearls were particularly beloved by princes. M. Jusserand gathered from “Issues of the Exchequer” the following information

¹ Ed. H. Yule, London, 1871; cf. also Bk. III, ch. 2.

² There was a popular French lapidary that went under the name of Sir John Mandevile, perhaps because it had so much to say of Oriental stones (ed. Is. del Sotto, Vienna, 1862; see Pannier, pp. 189 ff.).

concerning Edward III: "He gives his mistress Alice Perrers 21,868 large pearls, and thirty ounces of smaller ones. His daughter Margaret receives from him two thousand pearls as a wedding present."¹

As we read in *The Book of the Pearl*:

"The returning Crusaders in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and the development of the knightly orders, had much to do with spreading through Europe a fondness for pearls in personal decoration. Those who, like Chaucer's Knight, had been with Peter, King of Cyprus, at the capture and plunder when "Alexander was won," returned to their homes with riches of pearls and gold and precious stones. And learning much relative to decorative art from Moorish craftsmen, the jewelers of western Europe set these in designs not always crude and ineffective" (p. 19).

"In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries throughout Europe pearls were very fashionable as personal ornaments, and were worn in enormous quantities; the dresses of men as well as of women were decorated and embroidered with them, and they were noted in nearly every account of a festive occasion, whether it were a marriage, a brilliant tourney, the consecration of a bishop, or the celebration of a victory in battle."

"Among the greatest lovers of pearls in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries were the members of the ducal house of Burgundy, and especially Philip the Bold (1342-1404) Members of the related houses of Anjou and Valois also held great collections. Nor in this account should we omit some of the English sovereigns, including especially Richard II (1366-1400), one of the greatest dandies of his day" (pp. 21-22).

"The inventories of jewels and ornaments belonging to the kings and queens of France, to the nobility, and to the treasures of the Sainte-Chapelle, in Paris, and of the abbey and church of St. Denis, all mention a large number of objects decorated with pearls" (p. 425).

The authors give abundant examples from the 14th century of pearls set in gold owned by Louis, Duke of Anjou, the Duke of Berri, and others.

¹ *Lity. Hist. of Eng. People*, I, 264.

"The inventory of the personal property of Marguerite, Countess of Flanders, the mother of the Duke of Burgundy, was made in 1405. In this inventory we have a list of an immense number of ornamental objects of every sort and kind, and everything from the ducal crown to 'the smallest trinket, is garnished with pearls. In most cases the number of pearls is given, and we find that no less than 4494 are enumerated. Evidently the duchess was ever ready to honor the precious gem to which she owed her name, and fully recognized its poetical significance" (p. 426).

It is not without interest to see how some of our later English poets have regarded the gem from this point of view:

a) In *Hamlet*, v, 2, King Claudius (alluding to the medicinal quality of the gem) says:

"The King shall drink to Hamlet's better breath;
And in the cup an *union* [i. e., a *Unio* pearl] shall he throw,
Richer than that which *four successive kings*
In Denmark's crown have worn."

b) *Antony and Cleopatra*, II, 5:

"I'll set thee in a shower of gold, and hail
Rich pearls upon thee."

c) *The Faithful Shepherdess* (1611):

"*Orient pearls fit for a queen*
Will I give thy love to win
And a shell to keep them in."

d) Milton, *Paradise Lost*:

"The gorgeous East with richest hand
Show'r's on her *kings* barbaric pearl and gold."

e) Emerson, *Friendship*:

"Do churls
Know the worth of *Orient pearls*?
Give the gem which dims the moon
To the noblest or to none."

From the foregoing discussion, then, we may draw the following conclusions:

1. The opening stanza of the poem contains no mention whatever of the maiden Pearl. She is not contrasted with any other pearl, nor is there any allusion to her sepulchre, or her golden hair, or her place in heaven. In them Christ is not referred to, even by implication. Consequently, the bias that one and all translators, in a greater or less degree, have given to every reader's judgment concerning the elegiac and autobiographical elements in the poem, by making personal these important opening lines, is wholly unjustified.

2. On the contrary, the statements in these lines are only to be taken literally, without "secondary allusions" and "figurative meanings." They are best understood by comparison with similar ones in the lapidaries, then extremely popular in England, which have been neglected by translators and annotators in elucidating them. The great popularity of the pearl as an ornament of attire at the time, gave particular point to its emblematic use in the poem.

3. Finally, it is evident that, beginning themselves with the wrong impression that the girl Pearl is mentioned at the very start of the poem, critics not only have been led to seek out and emphasize unduly other possible personal references, but have lost sight of the author's artistic plan in the structure of his work.

But if we tear away the fictitious veil of personal reference which has been made to enshroud the opening of *The Pearl*, we see that every statement of the author is not only literally exact, but also calculated to arouse the interest of his readers, and to lay a foundation for the symbolism of the poem which he planned to develop; for,

from an actual treatment of the gem pearl, the poet leads us through various stages of symbolical presentation to the final symbol in the last line, in which, harking back intentionally to the first line, he prays that “we may *all* be pearls, unto the pleasure of the Prince of Heaven”—that is, that we may all come to have the spiritual qualities which in his verses he has represented the jewel as betokening, whereby we also may attain to the joys of paradise. Here is a well-ordered climax from the material to the spiritual, from the actual to the figurative, from the picturing of a representative individual to that of an all-embracing ideal.

“Qui Dieu aimme et ses vertus croit
Les pierres doit amer par droit
Qui ce desdit dit com pechieres
Que Diex n’ait mis vertus em pierres.”¹

Perhaps, furthermore, since we are considering the opening stanza, it may be well for us, before going farther, to contemplate the way in which a single word in it has been utilized to support a conjecture as to the poet’s love-relations with some unknown woman. When Professor Gollancz translated the poem years ago he saw in the word “privy” of the last line (“*þat privy pearl withouten spot*”) only the meaning “mine own.” But recently, riveting his attention upon the word more closely, he has been fortunate enough to discover its occult significance, and has been led to offer this interesting suggestion: “perhaps she [Pearl] was a love-child, hence his *privy pearl*” (p. 331)!² Is Professor Gollancz serious in this remark? or is he merely

¹ *Lapidaire*, ll. 49 ff. (Pannier, p. 239).

² *Camb. Hist.*, I, 331.

making sport of his elaborate “hypothetical biography” ? In a previous discussion,¹ on the contrary, he suggested that Pearl was perhaps the fruit of an unhappy marriage with a woman who “proved unfaithful” to the poet. Here is a disposition with a vengeance to drag in scandal in order to gratify our modern taste for personalities. If the unmentioned mother of Pearl, the Bride of the Lamb, was not the poet’s unfaithful wife, she might have been his mistress ! Take your choice. Never, however, forget “the great duel of sex.” Do not be content with what is said in the poem. Remember Abelard and his like. Guess what *might have been*.

In any case, Professor Gollancz is sure not only that Pearl was the poet’s *own* child, but also that she was his *only*² child. There is not the faintest gleam of obvious evidence on this point ; but if one is only subtle enough, one can discover hidden meanings—even in the opening stanza—that make the situation perfectly “clear.” How did Professor Gollancz happen to overlook the notable line at the end of the first octave, which “perhaps” sums up the whole situation in this regard :

“I sette hyr sengeley in synglere” ?

This he translated: “I placed my pearl supreme,” but Dr. Osgood, evidently more exactly, “her [it] I have set apart and alone.” If the adjective “privy” in the same stanza indicates that Pearl was a *love*-child, surely “singly in uniqueness,” “apart and alone” indicates that she was an *only* child. Moreover, the manuscript of the poem is unique !

¹ In the *Introd.* to his edition of the poem, p. xlvii.

² *Id.*, p. xlviii; *Camb. Hist.*, I, 331.

The following lines contribute all the evidence on this point that has hitherto been adduced:

“‘O Perle,’ quod I, ‘in perlez pyȝt,
‘Art þou my perle þat I haf playned,
Regretted by myn one on nyȝte’” ? (st. 21).

In his edition (p. xlviii), Professor Gollancz quoted the greater part of this “significant” passage, and remarked: “This is consistent with my theory concerning the poet’s married life”—*i. e.*, that his wife was unfaithful to him. Both times that Professor Gollancz quotes the passage he omits the words “on nyȝte,” and he translates differently those underlined: in his edition, “of me so *lone* regretted,” giving citations in a note (p. 114) to confirm the rendering of “one” as “*lone(ly)*”; in his article, “regretted by me *alone*.” As a matter of fact, the dreamer simply represents himself as mourning for his lost pearl when he is “*alone at night*”; but Professor Gollancz would have him state here that he “*alone*” (*i. e.*, only) mourned for the child, at night or at any other time. There was no other being in the world who cared a fig about her death. What conclusion could be more clear than that the poet had an unfaithful wife whom he would not mention, or a mistress whom he could not (at all events suitably) in a poem exalting above all else purity and holiness? And is it not also clear that since he mourned “*alone at night*” he could not have had another child?

It is important, in any case, to keep in mind the sort of evidence that has led Professor Gollancz to satisfy himself and to affirm as if there was no possibility of denial: “The personal side of the poem is *clearly* marked, though the author nowhere directly refers to his fatherhood.”¹

¹ *Camb. Hist.*, I, 321.

Dr. Osgood too has recently discovered something new, along different lines, in this opening stanza; namely, that in it "there sounds prophetically, but faintly, the note of peace and triumph which later brings the poem to its final cadence."¹ Considering what we have seen to be the meaning of the stanza, it is obvious that the "faintly" should, indeed, be emphasized—unless one's ears are attuned to sounds that ordinary mortals cannot hear.

II.

It is an obvious fact that symbolism is fundamental in the structure of *The Pearl*.

The poet begins by representing himself as having lost a pearl, that has slipped away from him into the grass. It is evident later, however, that this pearl he planned to be only the symbol of a little maiden, whom he represents as having died before she was two years of age, thereby to become a Bride of the Lamb in Heaven—in which position she is described at length by the poet, and a considerable body of argument and instruction put by him into her mouth.

The author does not compare the child to a pearl, as in a simile, but identifies her with one symbolically. Yet, it should be particularly noted that this identification does not appear, even by justifiable surmise of the uninstructed reader, before line 161, when for the first time a maiden is mentioned: up to then there is no indication whether the lost pearl (if one might conjecture it to be the symbol of some one departed, and probably some one of the female

¹ Introd. to translation, p. ix.

sex) was a sister, a niece, a cousin, a lady-love, a friend, or indeed an unequivocally allegorical figure—and not until line 241 is the identification of “the pearl, a girl” complete. Then, in a group of stanzas (21-26) each of which ends with the refrain, “I have been a joyless jeweller” (or words similar, of which “jeweller” is always the last) the poet plays around the symbol of the pearl, a girl in heaven. The dreamer asks the apparition he sees if she is his pearl which slipped away from him into the grass (245), leaving him a joyless jeweller ever since. Whereupon, “that jewel” rebukes him austere for saying that his pearl is “all away” when it is “in a coffer so comely clent” (259), *i. e.*, in paradise, which is a treasure-chest (*forser*) that should please him if he were a gentle jeweller.

In the following words,¹ the poet shows a tendency to heap up symbols:²

¹ I follow in the main Professor Gollancz's translation as being more literal; but Dr. Mitchell's rendering, so far as it goes, seems to me the most poetic of all that have appeared.

² The season chosen for the vision to take place is plainly symbolical:

“In August in a high season,
When corn is cut with sharp sickles” (39-40).

The “high season” is probably that of the Assumption of the Virgin, the fifteenth. No doubt, as I wrote in my previous article (p. 189), the choice of time and the wording was intended to suggest the harvest of the Great Reaper, as described in St. John's vision of one “like unto the Son of Man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle,” who, at the bidding of an angel crying with a loud voice “the harvest of the earth is ripe,” “thrust in his sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped.” We feel, as if our poet too, like the Apostle, may have heard a voice from heaven saying unto him: “Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth.”

(a) " 'twas but a *rose* that thou didst lose,
 that bloomed and withered, as nature bade;
 through the casket's grace, that held it secure,
 now 'tis proved a pearl of price " ¹ (269 ff.).

(b) " A jewel to me then was this guest,²
 And jewels were her gentle words " (277-8).

There is also symbolism (let us hope) in stanza 3, where the gem that fell to the ground is represented as so enriching the earth as to make peculiarly beautiful flowers to grow there; and, further, as a " seemly seed " that could not fail to yield " springing spices." The poet calls the maiden a " lovely flower " (962) and twice a " special spice " (235, 938).

It should be observed that the symbolism of losing the jewel is preserved throughout the poem in such phrases as the following:

- (a) " Through grass to ground it went from me " (10).
- (b) It " sprang " from him (13).
- (c) " It drove down in dark mould " (30).
- (d) It " trundled down " (41).
- (e) " Where the pearl did fall " (411).
- (f) It " strayed to ground " (1173).

¹ Of this passage Dr. Osgood says (p. 67): " The whole passage shows an imperfect identification of the symbol with its subject " (259-61); and yet he thinks that " no symbolic meaning is discernible " in the frequency of the epithet jeweler, though reminiscent of the same epithet in the parable of the pearl of great price (734).—Compare the epithets of " rose " and " margaret " applied to the Virgin in such a passage as the following from the close of Gower's *Mirour de l'Omme* (ed. Macaulay, I, 334):

" O rose sanz espine dite
 Odour de balsme, o mirre (myrrh) eslite, . . .
 Sur tutes belles la plus belle
 O gemme, o fine Margarite."

See also below, p. 628.

² In speaking to or of the girl personally the dreamer calls her: " that jewel " (253; cf. 277), " that gem " (289; cf. 266), " that precious piece " (192, 229). Even Christ is a " dear jewel " (795).

In one place it is made personal with the same sort of phraseology:

(g) "Since into grass *thou* slipped away from me" (245).

Literalness is, of course, out of the question. A young girl does not slip through the hands of a mourner and trundle down into the grass, any more than a rose turns into a pearl (no matter what coffer or chest it is put in), or a dropped pearl becomes a "seemly seed" yielding "springing spices," or a maiden speaks pearls.

Practically, however, the main thought of the poem is summed up in the word "pearl"; and in a consideration of the gem's attributes there originated many sorts of symbolical suggestion.

It is of small moment that both the gem and the girl are repeatedly called "precious," or "merry," or "gentle," or even "smooth" and "small." It is of more importance that both are "clean," "pure" and "white"—"undefiled," "without spot," "immaculate." Herein lies the final and chief teaching of the work, that those who dwell with Christ in heavenly joy are "pearls," spotless in His sight.

In the description of the maiden's attire, pearls are represented as her almost exclusive adornment. She was "pight in pearls of royal price"; her clothing was adorned with the "merriest margerries" the dreamer had ever seen; her kirtle was "with precious pearls all bedight" (sts. 17-20). And the "whiteness" of the maiden, like that of the pearl, is in this connection especially emphasized ("Blysnande whyt wat³ hyr bleaunt"—163, repeated 197):

"Bedight and broidered was each hem—
at the sleeves, the sides, and each opening—
with white pearls, with none other gem,
And burnished white was all her array" (st. 19).

We read also of her appearance: "white as pure ivory was her face" (178), "whiter than whale-bone was her hue" (212). Cf. stanza 63.

Particularly symbolical are two features of her adornment: 1. the crown on her head; and 2. (above all) the great pearl on her breast.¹

1. "A crown that maiden wore withal
bedecked with pearls, with none other stones,
and pinnacled high with pure white pearls" (205 ff.).

"That clean gem" (289) wore a "crown of pearl orient" (255). She declares that by the Lord she was "crowned clean in virginity" (768).

2. "But a wondrous pearl without a flaw
amidmost her breast was firmly set,—
soul of man might grow full faint,
ere mind of man might measure its worth.
I trow no tongue might e'er avail
to speak of that sight a fitting word,
so all unspotted, and clear, and pure,
was that precious pearl, where it was dight" (st. 19).

This pearl is later identified with the pearl of price of Scripture parable:

"'This spotless pearl, so dearly bought,
for which the jeweller gave all his wealth,
is like to the realm of heaven bright,
so said the Father of earth and sea,
'for it is flawless, clear, and clean,
round, without end, and winsome of cheer,
and common to all that righteous be.'
And lo, 'twas set amidmost my breast" (st. 61).

¹ Professor A. S. Cook, in his article "Pearl, 212 ff." in *Modern Philology*, Oct., 1908, pp. 196-200, writes as follows in conclusion: "the flawless pearl—evidently symbolical in a peculiar degree—that constitutes the jewel at her breast."

In similar fashion the girl herself is called a “pearl of price” (272). And just as it is repeatedly said of the gem that it was “immaculate” (*mascellez*, 732, 733, 744, 756) so the same statement is made of the girl: “O immaculate pearl in pearls pure” (745; cf. 768), “immaculate bride” (769), “a matchless maiden and immaculate” (780; cf. 923).

“‘Immaculate,’ quoth that merry queen,
‘unblemished I am, without blot’” (781-2).

The pearl that the poet first represents himself as losing, it is repeatedly said, was “without spot” (12, 24, 36, 48, 60). The pearl of price of the parable is likewise “spotless” (855). The girl herself is called a “clean gem” (289), “without gall” (198; 915), a “moteless (spotless) maiden” (961). Christ called her to Him “in His bonerté”:

“Come hither to me, my leman sweet,
For mote or spot is none in thee” (763-4).

It is manifest that the qualities of the pearl of price in the parable are those of the pearl on her breast. In the qualities of that one wondrous pearl that the “jeweller” of old sold all to obtain, are summed up the peculiar qualities of the girl in paradise, whom the dreamer longed to regain: it and she were clean, clear, white, pure, spotless, immaculate.

As has already been observed, it is explicitly stated that Pearl, as she appears to the dreamer, is a Bride of the Lamb, “His immaculate Bride” (769), His “leman sweet” (769). She, on her part, calls Christ:

“My Lamb, my Lord, my dear jewel,
My joy, my bliss, my leman free” (795-6).

and she thus describes her position:

“through His godhead my Lord the Lamb
took me in marriage unto Himself
crowned me queen to revel in bliss,
in length of days that ever shall last;
Yea, each beloved holdeth in fee
His heritage; I am wholly His;
His worth, His price, His peerless rank
are root and ground of all my bliss” (st. 35).

But it deserves emphasis that she was exactly like all the other Brides of the Lamb. She was in no way unique in appearance, vesture, position, or occupation. She was but one of the 144,000 whom the Lord had taken in marriage and crowned queens to dwell with Him forever.

“The Lamb’s wives in bliss we be
A hundred and forty¹ thousand, company” (785-6).

They form the “Lamb’s company” (893); all are “members of Jesus Christ” (458); “all in suit their livery was” (1108). The dreamer observes a procession in Sion

“of maidens all in that same guise,
as was my blest one ’neath her crown;
and crowned were all in self-same fashion,
arrayed in pearls and robes of white;
on each one’s breast was fastened firm
that winsome pearl of great delight” (st. 92).

In this radiant host (“meyny schene,” 1145) of followers of the Lamb, he saw his “little queen”:

“Lord! much of mirth was it she made!
Among her peers she was so white” (1149 ff.).

¹ Cf. 869-70: “an hundred thousand and *four* and forty thousand more.”

They together were “a comely pack of jolly (lovely) jewels.”

It is next to be noted that Pearl and all her company have the appearance and qualities of the Lamb Himself.

“Best was He, blitest, and most to prize,
that e'er I heard described in speech;
so winsomely white was His array;
His looks simple, Himself so gentle” (1131 ff.).
“So were his glents (looks) glorious glad” (1144).

Of Pearl we read that she was “blithely linked with bliss” (385), “a maiden of menske (grace) full debonaire” (162) [Christ had called her “his bonerté,” 762], “gentle” (602); “lovesome of form and face” (398), “sheen” (beautiful, 166, 965), “gracious gay without gall” (189); “burnished white was her vesture” (220)—she calls Christ “my dear jewel” (795; cf. “that gay jewel,” 1124), even as she herself is repeatedly called a jewel. She calls Him “my leman sweet” (829), “my leman free (noble, 796; cf. 805), even as He said to her: “Come hither to me, my leman sweet” (763). Above all, she was immaculate like her “immaculate Master” (900); she was “innocent” as her “glorious guiltless” Lord (799).

Further, not she alone but all the “meyny” that followed “the gentle Lamb” were “like to Himself in lote (look) and hue” (896). Of Christ it is said: “as praised pearls his weeds were” (1112); and the Brides of the Lamb were “depaynt (arrayed) in pearls and white weeds” (1102).

“This Lamb of Jerusalem had ne'er a spot
of other hue save winsome white,
stain nor blemish might ne'er touch
wool so white, so rich and rare;
wherefore every spotless soul
is for that Lamb a worthy bride” (st. 71).

The “seemly clot” (789) of Brides of the Lamb, the “meyny sheen” (1145) and “comely” (775), were a “flock without flake” (947), “clean without mote” (972), “without black spots” (945), “without filth, or gall, or glet” (1060), “spotless” (1068).

Thus our analysis shows that the symbolism of the poem centres in the fundamental conception of the pearl as “immaculate.” Recalling that the pearl which the poet represents himself as losing is repeatedly said in the opening stanzas to be “without spot,” we should now bear in mind that this quality is emphasized without ceasing by the poet, and applied to all the pearls mentioned by him and by all who bear them.¹ The adjective “immaculate” (*maskellez*) is applied to:

- (a) the pearl of great price.
- (b) the pearl on the maiden’s breast and on that of all the Brides of the Lamb.
- (c) the maiden Pearl.
- (d) the 144,000 Brides of the Lamb.
- (e) the Lamb Himself—the Master.

And, finally, it would seem, the hope is extended to the dreamer, and through him to every one, that he may obtain an “immaculate pearl.” The maiden instructs the dreamer that the pearl on her breast is “common to all that righteous were,” and counsels him: “forsake the mad world and purchase *thy* pearl immaculate” (744-5). She has already counselled him (st. 34) to be “deep devout in all meekness” if he wishes to appear in the abode of her Lord the Lamb, for “He loves aye such cheer.” And

¹ Dr. Osgood notes in his glossary (p. 149) of the word *juel*: “used figuratively of the Pearl, 249, 253, 277; of her words, 278; of her companions, 929; of Christ, 795, 1124.”

the final fruit of his vision and her instruction is his prayer: "May He grant us to be servants of His house and precious pearls to His delight." The "jeweller" (that is, the dreamer) of the opening lines of the poem discovers that he must be like the "jeweller" of the parable, forsake everything esteemed of worth in this world, to obtain the "pearl of price" and enjoy the life of the blessed—and to do this, he must be like a pearl, like a child, like Christ. The gem pearl in general, the pearl in the parable, the pearl on the breast of the maiden and her companion Brides of the Lamb, the maiden herself, the other Brides, and the Prince of Heaven were all pure and undefiled. So must all be who aspire to see Him in His glory. "Every soul that had no spot is worthy to be a Bride of the Lamb" (845-6).

Similarly, in another work by our poet, the idea of "cleanness" ¹ is strongly emphasized:

"On spec of a spote may spedē to mysse,
 Of þe syȝte of þe souerayn þat sytȝeȝ so hyȝe,
 For þat schewe me schale in þo schyre howseȝ,
 As þe beryl bornyst byhoueȝ be clene,
 þat is sounde in vche a syde & no sem habes,
With-outen maskle oþer mote² as margerye perle" (551 ff.).
 Clerrer counseyl, counseyl con I non, bot þat þou clene worþe,
 For Clopyngnel in þe compas of his clene Rose,
 þer he expouneȝ a speeche,³ to hym þat spedē wolde,
 Of a lady to be loued, loke to hir sone,
 Of wiche beryng þat ho be, & wych ho best louyes,

¹ In the familiar Biblical use of the word: "Create in me a clean heart," etc. (Psalms, LI).

² Cf. *Pearl*, 725-6:

"Harmleȝ, trwe and vndefylde,
 Wythouten mote oþer masele of sulpande synne."

³ Cf. *Pearl*, 36: "þat spot þat I in speeche expoun."

& be ryȝt such in vch a borȝe of body & of dedes,
 & folȝ þe fet of þat fere þat þou fre haldest.
 & if þou wyrkkes on þis wyse, þaȝ ho wyk were,
 Hir schal lyke þat layk þat lyknes hir tylle.
 If þou wyl dele drwrye wyth dryȝtyn þenne,
 & lelly louy þy lorde & his leef worþe,
 þenne confourme þe to kryst, & þe clene make,
 þat euer is polyced als playn as þe perle seluen.
 For loke fro fyrist þat he lyȝt with-inne þe lel mayden!
 By how comely a kest he watȝ clos þere,
 When venkkyst watȝ no vergynyte, ne vyolence maked,
 But much clener watȝ hir corse, God kynned þerinne,

How schulde we se, þen may we say, þat syre vpon thronē?
 ȝis, þat mayster is mercyable; þoȝ þou be man fenny,
 & al to-marred in myre whyl þou on molde lyuyes,
 þou may schyne þurȝ schryfte, þaȝ þou haf schome serued,
 & pure þe with penaunce tyl þou a perle worþe (1056 ff.).¹

In the long passage above, the author draws an interesting illustration of his thought from the *Roman de la Rose*:² there (he says) one might learn that, to obtain a lady's love one must study to do as she desires—similarly to obtain the love of the Lord, one must strive to conform to Him and make oneself “clean,” purify oneself till one becomes a pearl.

The poet also dwells at length upon the “clean” Virgin and her Son; “for non so clene of such a clos com neuer er þenne” (1088). And emphasis is laid on Christ's “courtesy”: “Alle called on þat cortayse & claymed his grace” (1097). This is parallel to the fine section (sts. 36 ff.) in *The Pearl*, in which we read of the Virgin “of whom sprang grace, who bore a child of virgin flower” (425-6):

“‘Courteous queen,’ then said that gay,
 kneeling to earth, with covered face,
 ‘Matchless mother and merriest maid,

¹ Cf. *Cleanness*, ll. 12, 17 ff., 27 ff., 161 ff., 195 ff.

² Further on this work, see p. 637, n.

Blessed beginner of every grace.'

'That empress in her empire (*bayly*) hath
all the heavens and earth and hell,
from their heritage none would she chase,
for she is queen of courtesy'" (st. 37).

Like the pearl which the poet put "sengeley in synglere" (8), and which was peculiar among gems because always found alone, the Virgin is said to be unique "for synglerty of her *dousour*" (sweetness), so that she was called "the Phoenix of Araby,¹ the bird immaculate of form" (430 ff.).

There is no distinction, it is emphasized, except in degree, between Pearl's condition and that of the Virgin in heaven. What is said of both is similar to what we find written of Our Lady in the various hymns, Ave Marias, Fifteen Joys, etc., which were so abundant in the fourteenth century, the product of devout zeal and mystic contemplation.²

In a longer allegorical poem, the *Castle of Love*,³ (*Château d'Amour*), attributed to Grosseteste, much in substance and phraseology is strikingly similar to what is

¹ Dr. Osgood (p. xxi; cf. 72 f.) lays too much weight on the similarity of this passage to Chaucer's *Book of the Duchess*, where Blanche is compared to "the soleyn fenix of Arabye, for ther liveth never but oon" (982-3). He appears to have overlooked my reference (article, p. 190, n. 3) to the remark of "Mandevile" (whose book our author certainly knew) "of the bird Fenix of Arabye"; "Et puet homme comparer cel oisel a Dieu, en ceo qe ni ad forsqe vn soul" (p. 25). There is no clear evidence that our author knew Chaucer, though the probability, of course, is that he did.

² At this time there was a great dispute about the dogma of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin.

³ Ed. J. O. Halliwell, 1849, pp. 77 ff.; M. Cooke, Caxton Soc., 1852; Weymouth, Phil. Soc., 1864.

said of the Virgin in *The Pearl* as just quoted, and of Pearl, the Bride of the Lamb. The Castle of Love is the body of the sweet, matchless maiden Mary. It had three “baillies” (809 ff): the inmost betokened her “holy maidenhood,” the middle one her “holy chastity,” and the outmost her “holy espousal.” All of these our author too dwells upon. The poem closes with an ecstatic picture of the joys of heaven, in the company of the Prince of Peace, whose face the righteous shall see:

“And he may see the dearworth queen,
God’s mother so bright and sheen,
The sweet maid, Saint Mary,
And all the fair company
They will make him joy with their might,
The apostles and the martyrs
The confessors and the virgins,
In which joys God of His high grace
In Heaven give *you* all a place.”

As everyone no doubt has noticed, the author of *The Pearl* has peopled paradise with none but maidens. He mentions no apostles, no martyrs or confessors, but only virgins. Yet he holds out the hope that we may all gain the rewards of Heaven—and that by no merits of our own, but only “of His high grace.”

St. Aldhelm in his *De Laudibus Virginitatis* (written a. d. 706) called maidens “Margaritæ Christi, paradisi gemmæ.”¹ Repeatedly the Virgin is saluted as a pearl, a rose,² etc. In a *Coventry Shepherd’s Play*³ (v, 3), the words of the first Pastor are:

¹ See my previous article, p. 166.

² See Dreves, *Analecta Hymnica*, Leip., 1886 ff., *passim*; cf. Warton-Hazlitt, II, 284.

³ See *Eng. Nativity Plays*, ed. S. B. Hemingway (Yale Studies in Eng., XXXVIII), N. Y., 1909, p. 116.

“Hail, flower of flowers! fairest i-found!
Hail, pearl of pearls, prime rose of price”!

Dunbar, in his *Ballad of Our Lady*,¹ refers to the Virgin under many similitudes, most of which were traditional:

“Rose Mary, most of virtue virginal,
Fresh flower on whom the heavenly dew down fell;
O gem, joined with joy angelical.
In whom Jesus rejoiced for to dwell.
Root of truth, of mercy springing well,²
Of ladies chief, as is of letters A,
Empress of heaven, paradise, and hell,
O Mater Jesu salue Maria! (st. 1).

“Hail! purified Pearl, hail! Porte of Paradise,³
Hail! redolent Ruby, both rich and radious,
Hail! clarified crystal, hail! Queen, hail Empress!
Hail! mother of God, hail! Virgin glorious,
Hail! gratia plena, tecum Dominus,
Hail! Gabriel greeting with “Ave gratia,
Benedicta tu in Mulieribus.”
O Mater Jesu, salue Maria!” (st. 6).

In this poem she is also called “Virgins’ Queen,” “angels’ observance,” “God’s own chief delight,” “Christ’s love,” “sweet maid,” “meek maiden,” “mild mother,” etc.—likewise:

“O clear conclave of clean Virginity!
That closed Christ, without crimes criminal” (st. 2).

We remember that Pearl was “crowned clean in Vir-

¹ Cf. H. N. MacCracken, *Mod. Lang. Notes*, xxiv (1909), pp. 110 ff.
—Eng. version by Forrest. Cf. passage from Gower, cited p. 617, note, above.

² Cf. *Pearl*, 436: “Blessed beginner of every grace.”

³ In *Pearl* (1037-8) it is stated that each gate of Paradise was “a perfect pearl that never fades.”

ginity." It is not hard to find the sort of reading our poet had done, and what was in his thought when he described the pearls of paradise.

Naturally enough, under the circumstances, he reverted also to the description of St. Margaret, whose virginity, chastity and espousal to Christ are emphasized in the hymns and sequences sung in her honor.¹ There is no reference in our poem to the *life* of St. Margaret; but consideration of her position as a virgin in the hereafter was wholly in accord with the author's thought. I am glad to reproduce here the passage from the prologue to the life of St. Margaret in the *Legenda Aurea*² which Dr. Osgood quotes: "Margareta dicitur a quadam pretiosa gemma, quae margarita vocatur; quae gemma est candida, parva, et virtuosa. Sic beata Margareta fuit candida per virginitatem, parva par humilitatem, virtuosa per miraculorum operationem. Virtus autem hujus lapidis dicitur esse contra effusionem, contra cordis passionem et ad spiritus confortationem." Here the name of the saint is brought into connection with that of the gem, the physical qualities of which are interpreted emblematically. The gem is "candida"; St. Margaret was a virgin. The gem is "parva"; St. Margaret was humble. The gem is "virtuosa" (referring to its medicinal qualities); St. Margaret performed miracles. This resembles the method of our poet. To him, as we have seen, the most striking physical quality of the pearl was that it was "spotless," "immaculate." Therefore, purity is first and foremost

¹ See Dreves, *Analecta Hymnica*, s. v. *Margaretha*, *passim*; Mone, *Lateinische Hymnen*, III, 403-13, etc.

² Ed. Graesse, 1846, cap. 93 (88), pp. 400 ff.; cf. Osgood, *Pearl*, p. xxxii: "Three of the eight English lives of St. Margaret paraphrase this prologue, namely, those by Lydgate, a pseudo-Barbour, and Bokenam."

the theme of *The Pearl*. But the gem was also "small," and the poet pictures his pearl as a child and emphasizes also humility, meekness, and resignation to the divine will. By virtue of the spiritual qualities which the gem symbolized, Pearl became a Bride of the Lamb—so the poet prays that we may all be pearls, that we may see the Lord face to face in Sion.

Dr. Osgood, who alone has undertaken seriously to refute my arguments for symbolism and allegory in *The Pearl*, admits (p. xxv) that there are "certain allegorical [*i. e.*, symbolical] elements" in the poem, which he defines as follows:

"First and most obvious is the figure of the pearl lost in the grass, which, however, rapidly fades into a more literal manner of speaking, and, *except for occasional epithets*,¹ has quite disappeared within the first three hundred lines. Secondly, once having associated the maiden with the gem through their common name, it is natural that even a poet who had no preference for allegory should come to feel some correspondence between the qualities of both which would impart, now and then, a certain allegorical cast to his work. Thus the pearl, which is used so lavishly in the poem as an embellishment, gathers a kind of latent symbolism from the qualities of her for whom it stands and with whom it is associated, and for the time being becomes a shining emblem of her virtues. But any such emblematic result was perhaps reached unconsciously, or at any rate did not constitute an important part of the poet's original design."

¹ It is important to note the passage which I have italicized. As a matter of fact, through these "occasional epithets," the symbolism of the pearl a girl *never* disappears from the poem; see above p. 617 ff.

Now Dr. Osgood's erudition is great, and he is well acquainted with mediæval literature. His edition of *The Pearl* is most scholarly. Yet one cannot but quarrel with the personal conclusions he draws from the facts before him. I pass by now the assumption which he makes, like others before him,¹ in complete contempt of evidence, that the heavenly maiden Pearl bore *on earth* the name Margaret, or, as Dr. Osgood learnedly argues,² "more likely Margery." What I believe Dr. Osgood should have recognized, after the thorough study he made of the poem, is this—that the "allegorical cast" (*i. e.*, the symbolism) of the poem does not appear "now and then" but pervasively, wherever it could appear, from beginning to end of the work. We may safely assert that it is not in the least "a kind of *latent symbolism*," and by no possibility could this "emblematic result" have been reached "unconsciously." How, in any case, can Dr. Osgood know that it "did not constitute an important part of the poet's original design"? Certainly, it seems to be absolutely fundamental. Take this away and the structure of the poem falls to pieces. On the other hand, take away the would-be "personal references" and their absence is hardly noticeable. We are content to leave the reader to decide whether he can agree with Dr. Osgood, who states (p. xxxiv) that the poet "rather tends to avoid symbolism, even when it lies in his way"!

¹ Usually first introducing it with a "perhaps," or "probably," which is soon, however, lost sight of.

² P. xxii; cf. xxxiii. On this point, see below, p. 652 f.

III.

We now pass to allegory proper, which strictly should be separated from symbolism.

Was the pearl ever interpreted allegorically? To this question, the answer is: Yes, almost countless times. The allegorization naturally appears primarily in connection with “the pearl of great price” of Scripture parable (Matthew, XIII, 45, 46)—which, it is important to remember, was present in the poet’s thought, as is plain from the following stanzas (61-62):

“‘ Jesu called his meek disciples;
 He said no wight might win His realm,
 Save he come there as a child;
 else might he never come therein;
 but the harmless, the undefiled, and the true,
 with ne’er stain nor spot of sapping sin,
 when they come knocking at that place,
 quickly the gate shall be opened for them.
 There is the bliss that cannot fade,
 that the jeweller sought among all earth’s gems,
 and sold his all, both linen and wool,
 to purchase a spotless pearl.
 “‘ This spotless pearl, so dearly bought,
 for which the jeweller gave all his wealth,
 is like to the realm of heaven bright,’
 so said the Father of earth and sea,
 ‘ for it is flawless, clear, and clean,
 round, without end, and winsome of cheer,
 and common to all that righteous be.’
 And lo, ’twas set amidmost my breast.
 My Lord the Lamb that shed His blood,
 He set it there in token of peace.
 I rede thee to leave the world so mad,
 and purchase thy¹ spotless pearl.”

¹ Gollancz reads “this”; see however, Osgood’s edition.

It will be noticed first that this pearl of great price is identified with the pearl on the maiden's breast, and said to have been put there by the Lord "in token of peace."¹ It indicates, further, "the bliss that cannot fade" and it "is like the realm of heaven bright"; it is "common to all that righteous were"—the reward of the faithful in heaven. Here is conscious allegory. The author gives deliberate assent to the method of the Church Fathers in allegorizing the plain statements of the Scripture text. He does not, to be sure, give all the allegorical interpretations of the passage.² Why should he? He had clearly an embarrassment of choice, and perhaps gave more than was really wise; for Dr. Osgood and other critics find the interpretation "somewhat confused."

On this passage Dr. Osgood has a learned and illuminating note which I should like to quote entire:

"The poet's interpretation . . . may have been prompted chiefly by Albertus, *Compendium Theolog. Veritatis*, 2. 4, *Opera*, ed. Borgnet, 34. 42: 'Coelum est corpus purum . . . essentia subtilissimum, incorruptibilitate solidissimum, . . . quietate perspicuum, . . . materia purissimum, figura sphericum . . . Beatorum spiritum habitaculum.' Yet it seems to reflect faintly some of the mediæval comments on this passage in Matthew. Augustine says the pearl represents Christ, or the love of one's neighbor, or the supreme knowledge of the Word, which resembles a pearl in being 'purus et solidus et nusquam a se dissonans' (cf. l. 738); or finally it signifies ourselves, whom we reclaim by giving all things else in exchange (*Quæst. 17 in Matt.*, Migne, *Patr. Lat.*, 35. 1371). In Jerome (*Comm. in Matt.*, 2, 13. 45, *Patr. Lat.*, 27. 98) it is knowledge of the Saviour, the sacrament of his passion, and the mystery

¹ Cf. also *Pearl*, 951-2 where "Jerusalem" is said to mean "nothing else but City of God, or Sight of Peace."

² My colleague, Professor Josiah Royce, has recently written (*Philosophy of Loyalty*, 1908, p. 157): "Let loyalty be your pearl of great price." In the *Assembly of Ladies*, Loyalty was adorned "with grete perles ful fine and orient." See below, p. 659 f.

of the resurrection. In Gregory it is the sweetness of the heavenly kingdom (*Hom. in Evangelia*, 11. 2). Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Catena Aurea*, tr. 1874, 2. 513. See Introd. p. xxxi. For their bearing upon this passage in the Introduction I add the following interpretations of the pearl: Christ, or the preaching of the Gospel, Chrysostom, *Hom.*, 23, on Matt. 7. 6 and *Hom.*, 4. 7, on Matt., 13. 45; the eternal life, Petrus Chrysologus, *Patr. Lat.*, 184, 1069; the Virgin (as frequently), Bernard, *Patr. Lat.*, 184. 1069; in a homily attributed to him (*Patr. Lat.*, 184, 1131) it is 'religio sancta, pura, et immaculata'; in Rupert of Deutz (*Patr. Lat.*, 169. 1202) the pearls of the heavenly gates (Rev. 21. 21) are the saints adorning the Church; Hugo of St. Victor (*Patr. Lat.*, 176. 1159) says each gate is one pearl, 'quoniam per unitatem fidei et puritatem' the just enter heaven; at 1163, citing Matt., 13. 46 and Gregory, he says, 'Margarita vero mystice significat evangelicam doctrinam seu dulcitudinem cœlestis vitæ'; Albertus Magnus says it typifies those who enter into faith in the whiteness of all virtues, or are distinguished by one, 'ut Abraham a fide, Lot ab hospitalitate,' etc. (*Comm. in Apoc.*, 21. 21, ed. Borgnet, 38. 778); Bonaventura says the pearl is the crown of every saint in heaven (cited 1186 n.). In Gregory of Nazianzen the Trinity is a pearl (*Patr. Græc.*, 36. 304); Ephrem the Syrian preceives in the pearl 'mysteries pertaining to the kingdom—in its brightness, Christ; in its purity, his body; in its undividedness, the Truth' (*Select Works*, ed. Morris, p. 84; cf. Albert S. Cook, *Mod. Lang Notes*, 20. 118); again Ephrem, in a hymn on the death of children (*Select Hymns and Homilies*, tr. H. Burgess, p. 14), says: 'Like pearls in diadems children are inserted in the kingdom.' Cf. 2 n., and 1211 and n. From this list may be found in general the sources of the interpretations in Usk's *Testament of Love*, viz., the church visible (2. 12); or, as a woman's name (Margaret), the pearl signifies grace, learning, or wisdom concerning God. This treatise is, of course, later than our poem" (pp. 82-83).

This valuable list might be considerably enlarged. According to Migne's Index (219, p. 266) no less than twenty-three Church Fathers deal with the parable of the pearl of price and its significance. For example, Rabanus Maurus, Archbishop of Mainz (c. 850), in his *Allegoriae in Sacram Scripturam*¹ and elsewhere indicates many

¹ Migne, exii, p. 996: "Margarita est coeleste desiderium ut in

interpretations of the pearl. As is noted in *The Book of the Pearl* (p. 304), Rabanus says that "mystically, the pearl signifies the hope of the kingdom of heaven, or charity, and the sweetness of the celestial life. True, it was not among the twelve gems which adorned the breast-plate of the high priest of the Temple, symbolical of the twelve apostles. A Father of the Church—St. Augustine, we believe—explains this by saying that it was reserved for a more sacred office, that of representing Christ himself."

It does not need argument, then, to show that the pearl has been allegorized scores of times in scores of different ways. The amazing thing is, how much of the thought of the Church Fathers has been distilled in the poem before us. The pearl, for example, in the allegories of the Fathers represents 1. Christ; 2. the Virgin; 3. the saints; 4. those who enter into faith in the whiteness of all virtues, or are distinguished by one; 5. supreme knowledge of the Word; 6. the resurrection; 7. the eternal life; 8. the crown of every saint in heaven; 9. mysteries pertaining to the kingdom; 10. wisdom concerning God; 11. gospel teaching; 12. sweetness of the celestial life; 13. love of one's neighbor; 14. purity; 15. grace; 16. truth; 17. "religio sancta, pura et immaculata"; 18. "ourselves, whom we reclaim by giving all else in exchange,"

Evangelio: 'Inventa una pretiosa margarita,' id est, concepto in mente desiderio coelesti. Per *margaritas* spiritualia sacramenta, ut in Evangelio: 'ne mittatis margaritas vestras ante porcos,' id est, interna mysteria non committatis immundis. Per *margaritas* homines justi, ut in Apocalypsi: 'Duodecim margaritae, duodecim portae,' quod homines sancti per fidem apostolorum aditum habent ad regnum coeleste. Per *margaritas* deliciae terrenae, ut in Apocalypsi: 'Mulier erat ornata margaritis,' quod fallacia hujus saeculi terrenis deliciis nitet."

etc. Any reader of *The Pearl* will recognize how much this manner of thought is present in the poem.¹ Even in places where the memory does not at once suggest the similarity, it will be seen to appear, as *e. g.*, in no. 5. “supreme knowledge of the Word.” This interpretation by St. Augustine is due to the fact that it resembles the pearl because it is “*purus et solidus et nusquam a se*

¹ The thought of the author is like that of St. Bernard, who, for example, writes in a sermon just before one on the Assumption (*De diversis sermo*, xxxvii): “*Quis enim coelibem vitam coel estem et angelicam dicere vereatur? Aut quod in resurrectione futuri sunt omnes electi, quomodo non jam nunc estis sicut angeli dei in coelo a nuptiis penitus abstinentes? Ampleximini, fratres, pretiosissimam margaritam, ampleximini sanctimonium vitae, qui vos efficit sanctorum similes et domesticos dei, dicente scriptura: In corruptio facit proximum deo. Ita ergo non vestro quidem merito sed gratia dei estis, quod estis: quod ad castitatem et sanctimoniam spectat, angeli quidem terreni aut [potius] coeli cives sed interim in terra peregrini; quam diu enim sumus in [hoc] corpore, peregrinamur [a domino].*” There is a literal translation in Old French, *e. g.*: “*Frere, teniz chiere ceste preciose mergerie, estranniz vos a sainte vie, car ille vos fait semblanz as sains et as amins de deu,*” etc. (Alfred Schulze, *Predigten des H. Bernhard in altfranz. Uebertragung*, Tübingen, 1894, p. 333).

Compare, for example, the following passages in *The Pearl*:

- (a) “For meek are all that dwell near Him” (404).
- (b) “May he grant us to be His ‘homely hyne’”
(servants of His house, “*domesticos Dei*”) (1211-2).
- (c) “I rede thee, forsake the mad world
and purchase thy pearl immaculate” (743-4).
- (d) “But knowest thou mortal anywhere,
be he ever so holy in his prayers,
that hath ne’er forfeited in somewise
the meed of heaven so bright?
And aye more often, the older they grow,
have thy left the right and have wrought amiss;
mercy and grace must pilot them;
the grace of God is great enough” (st. 52).

dissonans," with which compare what is said in stanza 62 of the poem, as quoted above (p. 632).¹

¹ Our author was likewise familiar with secular allegories. In my previous article (pp. 182 ff.), I pointed out how much he was indebted to the *Roman de la Rose*, one of the very few works to which he refers directly in any of his poems. Professor Gollancz has since written (*Camb. Hist.*, I, 321): "While the main part of the poem is a paraphrase of the closing chapters of the Apocalypse and the parable of the vineyard, the poet's debt to *The Romaunt [of the Rose]* is noteworthy, more particularly in the description of the wonderful land through which the dreamer wanders; and it can be traced here and there throughout the poem, in the personification of Pearl as Reason, in the form of the colloquy, in the details of dress and ornament, in many a characteristic word, phrase and reference; 'the river from the throne,' in the Apocalypse, here meets 'the waters of the wells' devised by Sir Mirth for the garden of the Rose. From these two sources, *The Book of Revelation*, with its almost romantic glamour, and *The Romaunt of the Rose*, with its almost oriental allegory, are derived much of the wealth and brilliancy of the poem. The poet's fancy revels in the richness of the heavenly and the earthly paradise; but his fancy is subordinated to his earnestness and intensity."

Even Dr. Osgood admits (p. xiv) that our author employed "the style and machinery" of the *Roman* and that he was familiar with and felt "a certain comradeship in his art" with "the many fourteenth century imitators of the *Roman*"—such as Baudouin de Condé and his son Jean, Watriquet de Couvin, Guillaume de Machault, Froissart, Deschamps, Langland, and Chaucer. He remarks, however (p. xvi): "Not one of the personifications of abstract qualities, whose speeches constitute by far the chief part of the *Roman* and its kind, is distinctly present in *The Pearl*." Why, we may ask, should they be "distinctly present"? The poet did not plan for them to appear and speak. Yet note that the dreamer was pierced by *Love-Danger* (l. 11; cf. 250); *Reason* tried to make peace in his heart (52); *Kind of Christ* shewed him comfort (55; cf. *Kind* in Langland); and he reflects on *Fortune* (129; cf. Boethius, Bk. II). Note also st. 63:

"Thy beauty ne'er from Nature came;
Pygmalion painted ne'er thy face;
Nor Aristotle, with all his lore,
Ne'er told of the properties of thy kind."

Had the poet any allegorical idea in his mind above all others? Arguing from the likeness of the poem in theme and phraseology to various mediaeval English works (*Clean Maidenhood*, *Love-Rune*, *Holy Maidenhood*, *Life of St. Margaret*, etc.), I suggested in my previous article (pp. 169 ff.) that, while Pearl was protean in symbolism, she was above all the emblem of Clean Maidenhood. I can only refer the reader to that article for the full illustration of that hypothesis. I confess that I am not now so much concerned to establish any particular allegorical teaching dominating the poem, as to obtain recognition of the fact that many sorts of allegorical suggestion are present in it, that the Pearl is a representative of the Brides of the Lamb, a representative of "the sweetness of the celestial life." The author pictured her life in paradise in the hope of making clear what is the real pearl of price which we should all seek. But, nevertheless, he mentions no others than virgins in Heaven, and "clean maidenhood" is to him an absorbing theme. Let scholars agree or not with my hypothesis about Pearl as primarily an emblem of chastity, they should not therefore deny the interweaving of allegory in the poem—such mystical allegory as was sanctioned and set forth by Christian writers during centuries previous to our poet's time, and was held worthy of acceptance then; for to do so is to misapprehend the purpose, plan, and potency of the work.

On the other hand, I regard as too purely subjective to be worth while such efforts at individualistic interpretations of the poem as the following by Dr. Osgood:

"Lastly, *The Pearl* may be considered allegorical somewhat as Dante's pilgrimage or *Sartor Resartus* is, in certain aspects, allegorical. Under the concrete and at least partly imaginary form of the dream lies a serious, almost prosaic, experience, familiar to all men of high spiritual aspiration. In early or middle life they often

seem to themselves to have achieved real wisdom, and to have laid hold upon the truth. But a sudden shift of fortune, or stroke of grief, destroys both faith and creed. Then comes the bitter and violent reaction, succeeded by indifferentism; but by slow degrees the ugly visitation becomes transformed and idealized, until it is the means of entering a new life of true wisdom and peace."

My desire has not been to read new possible meanings into the poem, in sympathy with our modern individualism, but simply to bring the light of mediæval conceptions to bear upon and elucidate the thought of a poem which is distinctly a product of its time.

Dr. Osgood contends (p. xxxiv) that because the poet does not *say* that his poem was allegorical, it could not have been; yet, as we have seen, he undertakes himself to define certain "allegorical elements" and invents new ones, which the poet failed even to "hint at."

He contends further that "virginity is only one of many interpretations of the pearl, and that it could never have been assumed by the poet to be the obvious, traditional one" (p. xxxi f). I agree entirely that there were many interpretations of the pearl. Indeed, I go farther and say that a learned man of the fourteenth century was so used to interpretations of the pearl that the word could hardly be mentioned without a great many rising to his memory instantly. And anyone then who wrote or read a poem entitled *The Pearl* would *expect* the treatment to be allegorical. He would not, however, expect the author of a *poem* to include a list of all previous or possible interpretations of the word, but only such as the poet chose to emphasize at that particular time for a particular purpose. Only a dull writer would need, or desire, to accompany his poem with a "key" to its meaning. It strikes one as ludicrous to have the author of the *Dispute between*

*Mary and the Cross*¹ explain at the end of his poem that the situation he presented was only the “fantasy of a clerk,” that, as a matter of fact, no wooden cross ever spoke. It would have been easy to make an assertion that the cross spoke, which the credulous might readily have accepted, as any one who reads the legends of the Holy Rood then current is aware.²

Richard de Bury gives us a good example of multiple allegory in the first chapter of his *Philobiblon* (written c. 1345):

“O Books, who alone are liberal and free, who give to all who ask of you and enfranchise all who serve you faithfully! by how many thousand types are ye commended to learned men in the Scriptures given us by inspiration of God! For ye are the minds of profoundest wisdom, to which the wise man sends his son that he may dig out treasures: Prov. ii. Ye are the wells of living waters, which father Abraham first digged, Isaac digged again, and which the Philistines strive to fill up: Gen. xxvi. Ye are indeed the most delightful ears of corn, full of grain, to be rubbed only by apostolic hands, that the sweetest food may be produced for hungry souls: Matt. xii. Ye are the golden pots in which manna is stored, and rocks flowing with honey, nay, combs of honey, most plenteous udders of the milk of life, garners ever full; ye are the tree of life and the fourfold river of Paradise, by which the human mind is nourished, and the thirsty intellect is watered and refreshed. Ye are the ark of Noah and the ladder of Jacob, and the troughs by which the young of those who look therein are coloured; ye are the stones of testimony and the pitchers holding the lamps of Gideon, the scrip of David, from which the smoothest stones are taken for the slaying of Goliath. Ye are the golden vessels of the temple, the arms of the soldiers of the Church with which to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked, fruitful olives, wines of Engadi, fig-trees that are never barren, burning lamps always to be held in readiness—and all the noblest comparisons of Scripture may be applied to books, if we choose to speak in figures.”

¹ EETS., I.

² Cf. EETS., 46.

Here, to be sure, are only a score of "noble comparisons" by way of example from the Scriptures—not the "many thousand" that the author declares he might have given. But they are surely enough to show the disposition to manifold and accumulated allegory on the part of a fourteenth-century Englishman acquainted with Scripture if he "chose to speak in figures." "Figures of the truth" is the happy phrase the Psalmist applied to this sort of writing. Fourteenth-century Christian writers were exceedingly prone to present "figures of the truth," and before them the "pearl of great price" had been numberless times interpreted allegorically. A pedant then might have collected many of these as I recently have done myself. Fortunately, the author of *The Pearl* was no pedant. It is a marvel how skilfully he adheres to a single conception. He does not attempt to give all the possible, or all the traditional, interpretations of the "figure" of the pearl, but only such as centred on the thought that was uppermost in his mind. Let us be grateful for the poet's power of artistic elimination and concentration. Let us be grateful that he did not feel the necessity of exploiting his erudition.

Mr. Coulton thinks it past belief that I could persuade myself that the subject of *The Pearl* is "merely an abstract virtue which never existed in the flesh." "Just think," he says, "of an abstract virtue as lost through her own death and decay." If the Pearl were "simply maidenhood, how could the author's lost maidenhood (!) now be safe in heaven." It is hard to be patient with this sort of criticism, and it does not need a reply.

One cannot but wonder, however, what Mr. Coulton thinks of the *Romance of the Rose*. There is the figure of a beautiful maiden, Rose, who is described with life-like

detail; but she is a mere symbol. Now, imagine a lover wanting to kiss a symbol! And think of a lady being surrounded by allegorical abstractions which keep her lover from his desires. Treat the Rose as allegorical, and Mr. Coulton must needs tell you, if he is consistent, that you are talking "sheer nonsense." Well, nobody can *prove* that Guillaume de Lorris did not actually love a girl name Rose and struggle to possess her. Yet, after all, we have perhaps been well-advised in ignoring the possibility, and concentrating our attention on the fact that Guillaume undertook to write an allegory of love in general, and a didactic treatise on the Art of Love, an *Ars Amandi*.¹

Thomas de Hales, in his *Love-Rune*, a poem similar in many features to *The Pearl*, writes to a young lady of the abstract virtue "maidenhood" as a gem surpassing many others (actual gems, which he names) that would keep her "sweeter than any spice," if she guarded it "under her hem," and would bring her "into the bliss of paradise," while this very gem was shining bright "in the bower of heaven." The author of the fourteenth-century poem *Clean Maidenhood* says that if any girl should set the abstract virtue "maidenhood" in "a sweet love-ring" she would shine forever as bright as the sun; also, that the Lord loved "maidenhood" to "dwell near Him." The author of the homily *Holy Maidenhood* says that "Zion, the high tower of Jerusalem . . . betokeneth maidenhood" while remarking at the same time that "maidenhood is queen of heaven." Such facts as these it is well to bear in mind when questioning the reasonableness of the mediæval poem before us.

There is evidently nothing in the least surprising in the fact that symbolism and allegory are omnipresent in *The*

¹ See E. Langlois, *Origines et Sources du R. de la R.*, Paris, 1891.

Pearl. The surprising thing would be if they were not there. My readers may have balked at putting a single definite name, Maidenhood, Virginity, or Chastity, to that of which Pearl is the emblem. I would not urge the matter; for names are not of much significance in a case like this. Any reader may determine for himself which, if any, particular "figure of the truth" dominated the author's thought. But surely he cannot have such obscure vision as not to see any "figures" in the poem.

In the *Legend of Good Women* Chaucer wrote of the flower Marguerite:

"Hele and honour
To trouthe of womanhede and to this flour
That berth our alder pris in figuringe" (298 ff.).

Professor Macaulay has recently pointed out¹ quite rightly that the expression "in figuringe" in the last line is equivalent to "in figure." The line means: "That displays the glory of us all in a figure or emblem." "It is not that the daisy surpasses all women in external beauty, but it is an emblem of their spiritual graces, of purity and of truth."

"Unlike other gems, the pearl comes to us perfect and beautiful, direct from the hand of nature. Other precious stones receive careful treatment from the lapidary, and owe much to his art. The pearl, however, owes nothing to man. Perhaps this has much to do with the sentiments we cherish for it. It touches us with the same sense of simplicity and sweetness as the mountain daisy or the wild rose. It is absolutely a gift of nature on which man cannot improve."

"Nature has many instances of the humble and lowly

¹ *Notes on Chaucer*, in *Mod. Lang. Review*, iv (1908), p. 19.

raised to high degree, but none more strikingly beautiful than this. One of the lowest of earth's creatures, suffering a misfortune, furnishes a wonderful lesson upon the uses of pain and adversity by converting its affliction into a precious gem symbolical of all that is pure and beautiful. As written by a forgotten poet: 'Forasmuch as the pearl is a product of life, which from an inward trouble and from a fault produces purity and perfection, it is preferred; for in nothing does God so much delight as in tenderness and lustre born of trouble and repentance.' As the great [fourteenth-century] Persian poet Hafiz says:

'Learn from yon orient shell to love thy foe,
And store with pearls the wound that brings thee woe.'"

"No Oriental divinity, no object of veneration has been without this ornament; no poetical production has lacked this symbol of purity and chastity."¹

IV.

We now come to a discussion of the question which seems to be of chief interest to modern critics, namely, the auto-biographical element in the poem. Is *The Pearl* an elegy deliberately written by a father to commemorate the death of a little daughter of his own? To be sure, the poet does not say that it was; he never refers to the child he represents himself as seeing in a vision as his or anybody's child; nor does the child in heaven refer to the dreamer as her or anybody's father. But ought we to pay any attention to this? Must not the child have been his own? We, in

¹ Quotations from Kunz and Stevenson, *Book of the Pearl*, pp. 305, 47, 3.

our own age, should enjoy the poem more if it were a strictly "personal" elegy. *Must* it not have been?

"What a poet does not reveal in elegy should surprise nobody," says Dr. Osgood (p. xxxiv); and so, provided there is nothing at all revealed, we have *carte blanche* to imagine what we like and to insist that it is true. "Elegy is generally reticent," continues Dr. Osgood, "and especially so in the utterance of grief and struggle of so private a nature as that intimated in *The Pearl*." To be sure, there does not seem to be anything so essentially "private" about a man's losing his daughter that if he were to undertake to write "what is obviously an elegy" about the situation, he should never mention the fact that he ever had a daughter. But let that be. There is no limit to the "intimations" any seeker may discover in an imaginative work to suit himself. Professor Gollancz, for example, finds in our poem, at one time an intimation of the poet's domestic unhappiness due to an unfaithful wife, at another an intimation of the fact that Pearl was the poet's "love-child" by some other unnamed woman. Miss Mead finds in a line saying that princes delight to set the gem pearl in pure gold a "tender" intimation that the girl Pearl had golden hair; while Dr. Osgood thinks the same words intimate that the poet "may have provided costly sepulture for the child." Dr. Osgood finds "prophetically but faintly" in the opening lines a "note of peace and triumph," though these contain nothing but a description of a stone. Translating a passage which seems to mean only "I lack pearls" by "I am undone with sin,"¹ he had an intimation that *The Pearl* "opens shadowed recesses of a struggling soul, unpenetrated with light of heaven, and dismal with the echoes of a bootless plaint. *Here and*

¹ See below, p. 663, n.

*there, out of the gloom, grins the hideous face of some past sin, some nameless fear, of depression, loneliness, and despair.”¹ He had a further intimation that the poet’s “emotional experiences had been self-centred,” but that “a serious, almost prosaic experience, familiar to all men of high spiritual aspiration is “figured in *The Pearl*.² Professor Gollancz, who with many others, had an intimation that Pearl was an *only* child,³ had this private intimation that “with the loss of his Pearl a blight seems to have fallen on the poet’s life, and poetry seems gradually to have lost its charm for him.”⁴ (Let the word “seems” be thrice underlined, since the idea is grasped out of pure air!) “*Cleanness and Patience*,” he adds, “were written probably⁵ some few years after *Pearl*; and the numerous references in those two poems to the sea would lead one to infer that the poet may have weathered the fierce tempests he describes. His wanderings may have brought him even to the holy city whose heavenly prototype he discerned in the visionary scenes of *Pearl*”—“Glosyng is a full glorious thing, certeyn!”*

I have already shown that the general predisposition to regard the poem as first and foremost a personal elegy has been based in part on misunderstandings and wrong translations of the opening stanza; that, furthermore, the poem from beginning to end is insistently symbolical, with an interweaving of allegory; and that, as for the author,

¹ Introduction to translation, pp. xvi, xii.

² See above, p. 638 f.

³ Miss Jewett speaks of the poem (p. x) as “the lament of a father for a little, *long-lost* daughter.”

⁴ *Camb. Hist.*, I, 331.

⁵ The probability is exactly the opposite, if one may judge from progress in the poet’s art; see my previous article, p. 165, and Osgood, edition, p. xlvi. For further intimations to Professor Gollancz, see p. 672, n. 2.

“sounding in moral vertu was his speche.” The most casual reader will recognize that the poet is a careful, painstaking artist, that he uses an exceedingly complicated metre, and that his work is very elaborate in structure.¹ Finally, no one will deny that he would not have written as he did, had it not been for the particular vogue of various literary devices favored in his day and used innumerable times as the induction to, or vehicle of, allegory—such as the dream, the vision, and the debate.

In *The Pearl* the plan of the poet is to represent himself as falling asleep in a beautiful garden, under the sensuous influences of singing birds and fragrant flowers, by way of induction to an imaginary vision of a little child, first in the earthly and later in the heavenly paradise. In the mouth of this little child, he arranged to place instruction, to be elicited by the dreamer in dialogue, regarding the condition of maidens like her, Brides of the Lamb, in heaven, an interpretation of the parable of the vineyard in its relation to the much-vexed controversy of the time on good works *vs.* grace as a means of gaining eternal rewards, and a description of the New Jerusalem, after the fashion of the Apocalypse.

It is difficult to understand how anyone acquainted with mediæval literature and familiar with the very numerous dream-poems, vision-poems, debates, and allegories of divers sorts current in the fourteenth century, could think of these features of the poem as anything more than conventions which a fourteenth-century poet would most naturally have employed as a means of presenting his thought, and which, in the case of the author of *The Pearl*, were altogether suitable to his theme. Yet, Dr. Osgood

¹ To Miss Mead the poem is “simple indeed as a little child” (p. xviii.).

inclines to think that even the dream may be no device. He calls it a “device” (p. xiv) and was aware of innumerable parallels; ¹ but he suggests, nevertheless, that the poet may have had “an *actual* dream which comforted him in his grief and which he elaborated into his poem” (p. xvii). Now, who can deny this? Is it therefore true? Dr. Osgood points out that the author adopts a “curious practice of fourteenth-century poets,” that of dating the poem: the author says (as we have seen ²) that his dream occurred “in August in a high season,” *i. e.*, doubtless, about the day of the Assumption of the Virgin. “The appropriateness of the date of this feast to the theme of the poem is obvious,” says Dr. Osgood; but still he suggests that this may be the day of the “actual dream,” or “the date of the poet’s conception of his work.” When the dreamer fell asleep, he heard a “sweet song.” ³

¹ In his own words (p. xiv f.): “The device of the sleep and the vision in field or wood was put to a great variety of uses in the fourteenth century. Besides the traditional use as the setting for a love-poem or for the praise of women, it was also employed in allegory of a moral or homiletic cast; in parables, *dits* and *contes*; in satire, both political and ecclesiastical; in eulogy; in poems treating a combination of these themes; and finally, as in *The Pearl* and Chaucer’s *Book of the Duchess*, in elegy.”

² See above, p. 616, n. 2.

³ Cf. Boccaccio’s *Eclogue* (l. 38): “Quos insuper audio cantus,” etc. We wonder if the birds of the earthly paradise took a similar interest in him and dictated his poem.

“For, quen þose bryddeȝ her wyngeȝ bete,
þay songen wylh a swete asent;
So gracios gle coupe no mon gete
As here & se her adubbement” (93 ff.).

Think of the rapture (“gracios gle”) of composition!

With *The Pearl* one might well compare the opening and ending of the Anglo-Saxon *Be Domes Dæge*, a translation of the *De Die Judicii*, ascribed to Bede (ed. Lumby, EETS., 65).

“This,” says Dr. Osgood (p. xvii, n.), “seems to designate *The Pearl* itself or at least the part from l. 61 on,” “or at least the poet’s first conception of it” (p. 55)!

Now, inasmuch as no one can prove that the author had not an “actual dream,” no one can prove that it did not occur just at the obvious time. And if we dispose of this mist of an “actual dream,” it does not matter much what one thinks of the autobiographical element implied in the alternative, that it was the date of “the poet’s conception of his work.” If it is pleasing for any one to think so, let him think so. There is in any case no gainsaying the possibility. But somehow we fancy that when a poet dated his poem (as was the custom in his age) by dating the event of his poem, a would-be dream, at the most suitable time of the year for him to have had that dream, or to have conceived the scheme of imagining that he had a dream at that particular time, he knew what he was about. Without inquiring too closely into that “sweet song” that the dreamer heard in his dream (which means “*The Pearl* itself, or at least the part from l. 61 on,” “or at least the poet’s first conception of it”), or discussing whether or no the author was another Sigurth, or a Cædmon, or a Halbjørn Hali, or some other supernaturally-aided, legendary person—we might go the whole way at once. Why not state, with the calm dignity of assurance which is based on the impossibility of denial—not simply that the poet had a young daughter called by the suitable name Margery, who appropriately died at the age when it was suitable for the argument he wished to advance, and that her mother and all other relatives and friends were conveniently got rid of in some unexplained way, and that, at the most appropriate time of the year for it to happen, he dreamt a dream, or it came to him to say that

he dreamt a dream, in which he heard his poem sung as a “sweet song”—but also that he saw in the aforesaid dream just what he says he saw, in its perfection of suitability for an artistic setting, and listened while his dear Pearl narrated for him the parable of the vineyard, and showed him paradise. He might have, of course,—one sees strange things in dreams, and sometimes one’s dreams have a strange likeness to the thing one wants to dream, or have heard that others have dreamt. It is really appalling to what pleasurable lengths of possibility the argument would lead. Surely, it ought to be apparent to every scholar not only that the dream is a device, the place is a device, and the date is a device, but also that the things seen and the way they are seen, and the words that are spoken, are fashioned artistically, with deliberate care, for a thoughtful purpose.

It is evident that, given the convention of the setting, and general “machinery,” the very minimum of personal relationship between the dreamer and the maiden is established. All that the poet says is that, alone at night, he laments having lost his pearl, and that the contrast is great between her condition and his, for he remains behind, pensive, despairing, desolate, a joyless jeweller, while she is happy, without anxiety or strife, in paradise. The poet might have represented the maiden as his daughter—as a poetic device, to add interest to the poem, without any foundation in fact; but he does not even do that. One cannot affirm that *The Pearl* is even an *imaginary* vision of a “father” without going beyond the information in the text.

Great stress is laid by most of those who seek first and foremost “personal allusions” in the poem, on the statements made by the dreamer when he first catches sight

of Pearl beyond the marvellous mere, sitting at the foot of a crystal cliff: "I knew her well, I had seen her ere,"¹ and "long I gazed upon her there,—the longer, I knew her more and more" (st. 14). But any one acquainted with mediæval literature should know that this is a mere convention.² I need not repeat what I wrote in my article on this point (pp. 177 ff.), but shall simply ask the reader to consider, by way of example, the appearance of a beautiful lady to Boethius in his mute distress, and how he came gradually to recognize in her his nurse Philosophy, who had come from on high to comfort him and give him good instruction; or the appearance of the "lady of lovely countenance" in the *Vision of Piers Plowman* who descended from a cliff and addressed the dreamer gently as "Son":³ only gradually did he come to know her as Holy Church, who had received him first and taught him the Faith, and whom he had vowed to love faithfully while his life should last. Many an allegorical visitant who came to comfort and counsel a lonely man was thus represented as having been known to him before, but not at first recognized when she appeared under such strange conditions. In *The Pearl*, the maiden who approached the dreamer bore in physical form no likeness at all to the little child whom the author represents himself as having lost. She was in symbolical raiment, covered with pearls, with

¹ Miss Mead (p. xxi) calls this a "pregnant phrase."

² Of course, to use a convention is not necessarily to be "conventional"; cf. Osgood, edition, p. lv.

³ In Sir David Lyndesay's *First Buke of the Monarchy*, the poet begs the venerable man Experience, who appears to him in a dream, to give him, "a desolate man," counsel. The old man does so, but first rebukes him for desiring the impossible.

"Thou art a great fool, Son, said he,
Things to desire which may not be" (359).

a crown of pearl, with a pearl at her breast, in gleaming white attire, fully mature—and a most accomplished expounder of the verities of the Christian religion. By no possibility could the dreamer have recognized her as any infant, less than two years old, whom he had known on earth. In saying, then, that the longer he looked at her the more he knew her, he is, in all probability, simply borrowing a feature from earlier allegorical vision literature.

The feature of the child's maturity after death is paralleled in Boccaccio's eclogue *Olympia*, which, as I tried to show in my previous article (pp. 203 ff.), stands in particularly close relationship to *The Pearl*, being probably the starting-point of our poet's conception. Dr. Osgood, who agrees (p. xxxv) that the latter is indebted to Boccaccio, writes on this point as follows (p. xxv): "Chronological facts seem to show that Violante's [*i. e.*, Olympia's] maturity in the vision is not that which she would have attained at the time of the vision had she lived, but merely a concession for sake of verisimilitude in the dialogue. The case may have been similar in *The Pearl*. Or very likely the reason in both cases may have been theological." Dr. Osgood's quotations from St. Augustine in support of his last statement are important. Pearl's maturity is also a convention.

Boccaccio pictures his dead child as "ea in etate in qua morientes celestes effici cives credimus"—and, he adds: "et ideo ex Violante dum viveret, mortuam celestam, id est Olympiam, voco." Boccaccio, then, changed the name of his child from Violante to Olympia because she had become celestial. Surely, this should make cautious those who imagine (and nearly everybody is practically certain about it) that Pearl on earth was called Margaret, or

Marguerite, or Margery; for Pearl is the same sort of celestial name as Olympia.¹ We remember St. Aldhelm's description of maidens as "Margaritæ Christi, paradisi gemmæ." Quite as good a case, however, might be made out for "Rose" as the girl's name on earth, if she really must be given one. We recall that in the first speech she makes to the dreamer, in reply to his question: "Art thou my pearl," etc., she says:

" 'twas but a Rose that thou didst lose,
that bloomed and withered, as nature bade;
through the casket's grace, that held it secure,
now 'tis proved a Pearl of price" (st. 23).

And later he says: "My pearl, thou art so rich, so radiant a rose" (76). Rose was the name of an English maiden in the twelfth century, to whom Hilarius, a disciple of Abelard, wrote a poem,² and it must have been popular as a maiden's name in England in the fourteenth century, if only because of its connection with the Virgin Mary or the suggestion of the *Romance of the Rose*. But this gues-

¹ Cf. Lydgate, *Reason and Sensuality*, ll. 665 ff.:

"Th' orient, which ys so bryght
And casteth forth so clere a lyght
Betokeneth in especiall
Things that be celestiall,
And things, as I kan diffyne
That be verrely dyvyne."

There is much in the setting of this poem that reminds one of *The Pearl*. The author "expounds" the "heavenly empress" Nature, who appears to him in a vision.

² *Hilarii Versus et Ludi*, 1838, p. 13, "Ad Roseam": "Nomen tuum signat rosam,—et ecce virginitas."

On the use of the name Rose in literature before the *Roman de la Rose*, see E. Langlois, *Origines et Sources du R. de la R.*, Paris, 1891, pp. 40 ff.

sing is futile, except to emphasize that there is no shred of evidence to prove that, if Pearl ever had flesh and blood on earth, she was called Margaret, or Marguerite, or Margery.

It has been argued that if Boccaccio's poem was really inspired by the loss of a daughter, and if the author of *The Pearl* got his suggestion from Boccaccio, then our poet's experience, like Boccaccio's, must also have been actual.¹ But this does not in the least follow, and all probabilities point to the reverse. In the first place, the eclogue is full of personal facts, openly stated,² and Olympia always addresses the dreamer as her father, while he repeatedly calls her daughter—in glaring contrast to the complete vagueness of *The Pearl*. In the second place, while no one can deny the possibility of a similar inspiration repeating itself from a similar cause, the probability is much greater that a second work along lines already indicated is primarily due to *literary* suggestion. It is well known that poems which may have had some personal reason for their composition, have been imitated simply as poems, without any such basis of inception. A good example occurs in the Marguerite-poems of the fourteenth century.³ In Machaut's *Dit de la Marguerite* we may have, under the figure of the flower Marguerite, the daisy, explicit praise of a lady named Marguerite, who was a mistress of Pierre de Lusignan, King of Cyprus. But the fact that this poem was a success, not that there may have been other Marguerites, or other ladies who might imagine themselves to be hinted at in poems where a beautiful Mar-

¹ Coulton, *Mod. Lang. Review*, II, 43; cf. Gollancz, *Camb. Hist.*, I, 323.

² See my article, p. 214.

³ See J. L. Lowes, *Pubs. Mod. Lang. Ass.*, xix, 593 ff.; xx, 749 ff.

guerite was praised, led to the subsequent cult of the daisy and the further composition of poems on the subject by Machaut's disciples, Froissart and Deschamps. The style of the poem simply became a literary mode, and the symbolism of the daisy was perpetuated without inevitable "personal impulse." Had it not been for this mode, we should probably not have the Prologue to the *Legend of Good Women*, in praise of Alcestis, under whose conventional semblance certain critics are ill content not to be permitted to see a faithful portrait of Queen Anne.¹

But is there any straw of evidence for the autobiographical theory to which we moderns, who long so much for assurance on this point, can clutch with reliance? The longer we study the matter, the clearer it becomes that our wish only was father to the thought. Yet, in truth, there is one straw—one line of the poem—to which all who believe the work to be strictly elegiac finally cling for justification of their point of view: "Ho wat; me nerre þen auntē or nece" (233). "This and other personal allusions in the poem," says Dr. Osgood, "admit of no allegorical interpretation, and could only obscure and obstruct the poet's intention had he been writing allegory." The "other personal allusions," which Dr. Osgood indicates, are ll. 1-60 (we have seen how "personal" they are); ll. 373-380 (which we shall presently discuss, pp. 662 ff. below); and l. 743: "I rede thee forsake the mad world" (on which see the comment in a note below²).

¹ Mr. Coulton says that "for the daisy [Chaucer] has a love so tender, so intimate, that it is difficult not to suspect under the flower some unknown Marguerite of flesh and blood" (*Chaucer and his England*, London, 1908, p. 112).

² This remark of the maiden to the dreamer, Dr. Osgood thinks personal enough to argue from it that the poet was not an ecclesiastic. "She would," he says, "hardly have given [this advice]

It should be said first that no one to my knowledge has ever tried to give these lines an “allegorical interpretation”; all that I at any rate have contended is that they, as well as other parts of the structure and “machinery” of the poem, need not be taken with literal exactness as a revelation on the part of the author that the Pearl of his vision was his own dead daughter. But if the line quoted is to be taken literally and regarded as significant, positive, autobiographical evidence, outweighing all the emphatic negative evidence, of relationship, we should see exactly what inference may be drawn from it.

Mr. Coulton¹ seems to think the passage unimportant.

if he had already forsaken it” [the world]! But, obviously, this is to introduce into a general phrase a particular meaning not intended. We read in Matthew xix, 29, in the very passage where Jesus relates the parable of the vineyard, which occupies so large a part of *The Pearl*: “And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name’s sake shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life.” “Forsaking the world” is not, of course, equivalent to “taking holy orders.” The following passage from the *Prick of Conscience* (p. 163, l. 6034) shows the meaning clearly enough:

“First þas þat with Crist sal deme þat day
 And noght be demed er namly þai
 þat here forsuke þe werldes solace
 and folowed rightly Cristes trace,
 Als his apostels and other ma,
 þat for his luf tholed angre and wa.”

Hugo of St. Victor (*Allegoriae in Novum Testamentum*, Bk. II, ch. 25, *Patr. Lat.*, 175, col. 794) quoting Matt. XIII, “Simile est,” etc., adds: “Bonae margaritae, lex et prophetae, una pretiosa, Salvatoris scientia: omnia vero vendit et istam emit, qui sicut Paulus, veteribus observationibus renuntiat, ut Christum lucrifaciatur. *Item omnia vendit et pretiosam margaritam emit, qui pro amore cœlestium terrena contemnit.*”

¹ *Mod. Lang. Review*, II, 40.

He says: "It is sufficiently evident that the author here describes the girl as 'nearer to me than aunt or niece' for the same reason which makes him assure us two lines higher up that 'there was no gladder man between here and Greece'—it suited his rhyme." No doubt; but, if that is true, what is its bearing on the question of autobiography in the poem? Suppose in this passage the author simply chose the word "niece" because it rhymed with "Greece," does that explain the fact that where he did not need a word of relationship for that purpose, he made no reference to *any* relationship between himself and the child? Mr. Coulton refers me to Violante and Beatrice, and Dr. Osgood to Blanche the Duchess; but Boccaccio says explicitly that "Olympia" was his own daughter, and Dante that Beatrice was his beloved, while Chaucer makes plain who "good, fair White" was.

Mr. Coulton proclaimed that I was in error in saying that "the poet tells nothing whatever about the living child," since, as my critic pointed out triumphantly, the poet does tell us the color of her hair. But is this true? What we learn from the poem is simply the color of the hair of the maiden whom the dreamer is represented as seeing in paradise! According to the poet's description, the *heavenly* Pearl had, indeed, long, fair hair; but, as I remarked in my previous article (p. 183), so, according to the description of Guillaume de Lorris, had various allegorical figures in the *Roman de la Rose*: *e. g.*, Franchise "ot les chevous et blons et lons," and as for Beauty, "Les cheveus ot blons et si lons Qu'il li batoient as talons." Moreover, in the same connection in *The Pearl*, it is said that the maiden wore a pearl crown and other "royal array." If Mr. Coulton is right in claiming that the poet's words here prove that an earthly child Pearl

(Margery?) had long, fair hair, he must also believe that this child wore a pearl crown ("subtle," Mr. Coulton calls it) and other royal array. Here is an interesting autobiographical "lead" hitherto neglected: "perhaps" the young girl the poet mourned was really a princess, and "perhaps" he had in mind some such person as Margaret, daughter of Edward III (to whom the King give two thousand pearls as a wedding present) who might have died young!

The passage in question is as follows:

"As schorne golde schyr her fax penne schon,
 On schyldere; þat leghe vnlapped lyȝte.
 Her depe colour ȝet wonted non
 Of precios perle in porfyl pyȝte" (213 ff.).

If we wish to envisage Pearl exactly, we should carefully observe the last two lines. No translator apparently has doubted that "colour" in the third line (note the editor's italicized *ur*) is our word "colo(u)r." Professor Gollancz, Mr. Coulton, Dr. Mitchell, and Miss Mead take the "deep color" to pertain to the girl's "locks" or "tresses," whereas Dr. Osgood and Miss Jewett write "her color." Professor Gollancz translates: "though deep their colour, they needed not those precious pearls on her robe bedight"; Dr. Osgood: "Yet her color was deep, wanting not the adornment of the precious pearls in broidery all about"; and other translators with similar vagueness in the sense. Was Pearl's fair hair, or was her complexion, of a "deep color"? The question will not trouble us after we have recognized the fact¹ that the word at this point always translated "color" is really "collar." All the passage

¹ Pointed out by Professor Cook, *Mod. Phil.*, vi, 197 ff.

means is that there was no lack of precious pearls in the embroidered border of her deep collar.

When Pearl first appears to the dreamer, he marvels at her "fair face" and her "royal array," that shone like "glistening gold." She had a "visage white as smooth ivory" that increasingly bewildered him. Her gown, we read, was all gleaming white, open at the sides, and bordered with the loveliest pearls the dreamer had ever seen with his eyes; her sleeves were broad and adorned with a double braid of pearls; her kirtle was bright, of the self-same stuff; each hem of her dress (at the wrist, the sides, and the openings) was embroidered with white pearls; her hair, as we have seen, shining like pure gold, lay loose on her shoulders, and her deep collar wanted nought "of precios perle in porfyl pyghe." "I trow," says the poet, "no tongue might e'er avail to speak of that sight a fitting word."

This description, including the part concerning the collar, finds illustration in an almost contemporaneous allegorical poem, the *Assembly of Ladies*¹ (*Assemblé de Dames*), of which Loyalty is the central figure. The author disclaims any power to describe this lady's beauty, for never in his life had he seen one so "inly fair."

"In her estate, assured utterly,
There wanted nought, I dare you well assure,
That longed to a goodly créature."

"And furthermore, to speke of her aray,
I shal you tel the maner of her gown;
Of clothe of gold ful riche, it is no nay;
The colour bleuw, of a right good fasoun;
In tabard-wyse the slevës hanging doun;
And what purfyl there was, and in what wyse,
So as I can, I shal it you devyse.

¹ *Chaucerian and Other Pieces*. (Works of Geoffrey Chaucer, ed. Skeat, vii), Oxford, 1897, p. 397; cf. note p. 538.

“After a sort the collar and the vent,
 Lyk as ermyne is mad in purfeling;
 With grete perlēs, ful fyne and orient,
 They were couchēd, al after oon worching,
 With dyamonds in stede of powdering:
 The slevēs and purfilles of assyse;
 Thay were [y-] mad [ful] lyke, in every wyse.

“Aboute her nekke a sort of fair rubyes,
 In whyte floures of right fyne enamyl;
 Upon her heed, set in the freshest wyse,
 A cercle with gret balays of entayl;
 That, in ernest to speke, withouten fayl,
 For yonge and olde, and every maner age,
 It was a world to loke on her visage.”

It will be observed that, in this very similar description of a lady's attire, the author emphasizes how the collar and slit of her gown were alike (after one pattern) bordered “in purfeling” with large pearls, full fine and Orient. Loyalty was suitably dressed in blue, with rubies above all for ornaments: she wore “a sort (set) of fair rubies, in white flowers of right fine enamel” about her neck, and “a circle with a large finely-cut balas-ruby” on her head—whereas Pearl, also suitably, was dressed in white, with pearls exclusively for ornaments: she wore a crown of pure white pearls “with figured flowers wrought thereon,” and a large, wondrous pearl lay on her breast. Finally, one should note the similar inductions of the poems. The author of the *Assembly* represents a woman “all for-wearied” as falling asleep in a beautiful “arbor, fair and green,” one day in September, “at the falling of the leaf,” after “the corn was gathered in the sheaf.” whereupon she had her vision of Loyalty and her attendants, all alike clad in blue.¹

¹ In the *Legend of Good Women*, the God of Love had “gilte heer . . . corouned with a sonne” (B. 230). His queen, “Alceste the

One might also compare in this connection *The Flower and the Leaf* (freely rendered by Dryden), which Professor Skeat thinks is by the same author as the *Assembly*.¹ Here, similarly, we have the beautiful green arbor, flowers and fragrance, sleep, dream, procession of ladies and knights marvellous in appearance and attire, the dreamer's questions of a lady "al in whyte, with semblance ful demure," and her answers to her "fair daughter." The ladies were divided into two groups; those, clad in white, who served the Leaf and their queen Diana, "goddess of chastity," and those, clad in green, who served the Flower and their queen Flora. The former, we read, were dressed in white surcoats, the seams of which were set with strings of emeralds "as it were a maner garnishing"; "many a rich stone was set upon the purfils . . . of collars, sleeves, and trains round about, as great pearls, round and Orient" and other stones; each had on her head "a rich fret of gold" full of stately stones, and a chaplet of leaves (141 ff.). Diana, with her "heavenly-figured face" and her "well-shaped person," surpassed them all in beauty and, "more richly beseen," wore a crown of gold. The trumpeters of the white knights had "about their nekkes, with gret perlès set, Colers brode" (214-15). The ladies in green attending Queen Flora were all in surcoats that

debonayre" was "clad in real (royal) habit grene" (214) and on her head she wore a "fret of gold" surmounted with a white crown made "of o (one) perle fyne, oriental" (221). She was:

"So womanly, so benigne, and so meke,
That in this world, thogh that men wolde seke,
Half hir beautee shulde men nat finde
In creature that formed is by kinde" (243 ff.).

¹ *Chaucerian and Other Pieces*, pp. 361 ff.; cf. pp. lxii ff. Prof. Skeat says (p. lxiv): "Surely these descriptions of seams, and collars, and sleeves, are due to a woman." In that case, what shall we say of those in *The Pearl*?

were richly "purfyled" with many a rich stone; each had a chaplet on her head "which did right well upon *the shining hair*"; a lady, to whom each one "enclyned" humbly (cf. *Pearl*, 236) sang, "si doucë est la Margarete."

Such comparisons as these¹ not only make certain the translation "collar" in the passage under discussion, but also show the conventions of description, as well as dream-setting, that the author (most naturally and properly) utilized in shewing-forth his thought.

Yet, if any readers are unable to see the bearing of such parallels on the question of personal feeling and actual description in the poem, if they absolutely demand some personal relationship between the poet and *Pearl*, I think they should seek the key elsewhere. What might be regarded as a reference to relationship, is found in stanza 32:

"My bliss and bale thou hast been both,
but much the greater hath been my moan;
since thou wast banished from every path,"

¹ With such phrases from *The Pearl* as: "þe myryeste margarys, at my deuyse, þat euer I seȝ yet with myn yȝen" (199 f.), cf. "It was more pleasaunt than I coud devyse," "That ever yet in al my lyf I sy" (*F. and L.*, 199, 87); with "baysmest gef myn hert a brunt," "with yȝen open & mouth ful clos, I stod as hende as hawk in halle. I hope þat gostly watȝ þat porpose" (*Pearl*, 174 ff.), cf. "as it were a sot, I stood astonied; so was I with the song Through ravished, that, [un]til late and long Ne wist I in what place I was, ne where," "as me thought, I surely ravished was Into Paradysse" (*F. L.*, 174 ff.); with *Pearl*, 223 ff., cf. "To tell right their greet beautȝ, it lyth not in my might, Ne their array" (*F. L.*, 138 ff.); with *Pearl*, 213, "of self sute," cf. "in a sute," "in sute," "al in a sute" (*F. L.*, 227, 335, 340); with *Pearl*, 215, "wonted non," cf. "nothing lakked" (*F. L.*, 426); with *Pearl*, 221, "her semblaunt sade," cf. "with semblance ful demure" (*F. L.*, 459); cf. "her countenaunce ful sad and ful demure" (*A. of L.*, 82), with *Pearl*, 231, "heþen into Greece," cf. "fro this countrey til Inde" (*A. of L.*, 482).

² The word in the text *woþe* is doubtful in meaning. Professor

I wist not where my pearl was gone,
 but now I see it, my sorrow is eased:
 when we were parted we were at one,
 God forbid we be now wroth;
we meet so seldom by stock or stone;
 though thou canst speak with such fair grace,
 I am but dust and margerries miss (lack);¹
 but the mercy of Christ, and Mary and John,
 they are the ground of all my bliss."

This is absolutely the only hint in the poem of any meeting-place between the poet and Pearl, the only hint of any manner of human association,² and it is certainly

Gollancz derives it from A. S. *wāp*; cf. Ger. *weide*; but Dr. Osgood derives it from O. N. *vāpi*, danger. Therefore I draw no inferences from the passage.

¹The passage reads "I am bot mol & marerez mysse." Mr. Gollancz, emending *marerez* to *marrez*, renders the last clause, "grief woundeth me"; Dr. Mitchell: "my joy is gone"; Mr. Coulton: "heaviness." Dr. Osgood in his translation renders it "undone with sin"; in his edition (p. 70) he writes: "marerez mysse. A botcher's blunder?" that is, I am worth no more than a botcher's blunder, good for nothing. But this is a bit forced. Holthausen and a reviewer in *Ath.*, 1891. 184 suggests *manerez mysse*, *i. e.*, 'I lack manners,' but *N. E. D.* shows that 'manners' was not employed in this sense till much later."—Miss Jewett (following Dr. Osgood) translates the words: "my deeds amiss"; Miss Mead (following Professor Holthausen, *Archiv*, xc, 146): "lack manners."

I would suggest that for *marerez* we read *marierez* or *margerez*, *i. e.*, "margerries" (French *margerries*); cf. *mariorys* (206), *margarys* (199), *margyrye* (1037)—the meaning being: "I am but dust and lack margerries (pearls) [such as beautify you in heaven, 'wyth precios perleȝ al vmbepyȝte' (204, etc.)].". The same sort of contrast is found in ll. 905 ff.: "I am but muck and mul (dust) the while, and thou so rich a radiant ("reken") rose";—and notably in the oft-quoted stanza (21) beginning: "O Perle,' quod I, 'in perleȝ pyȝ,' where the dreamer contrasts his loneliness on earth with her joy in paradise, concluding: "Since we were separated and torn asunder, I have been a joyless jeweller" (251-2).

²"Meet," to be sure, is in the present tense; but it suggests past meetings of the sort now missed. Would a *father* ever speak of meeting his own daughter "by stock or stone," and nowhere else?

not inconsistent with the other supposedly personal statement that the child was nearer [and dearer] to him than aunt or niece. "Perhaps" we have here the secret of the whole story: it was not the loss of his own child that the poet had in mind, but only that of a little girl whom he had been accustomed to meet "by stock or stone" (*i. e.*, by the wayside), and had become devotedly attached to. She called forth his tenderness specially, for he had nothing else as the ground of his bliss "but the mercy of Christ and Mary and John." Here, no doubt, the ecclesiastic speaks. Is it not significant that the only information the poet gives us about Pearl on earth is:

"Thou didst not live two years in our land,
God thou couldst not please or pray,
Ne'er knewest thou paternoster or creed"? (483 ff.)

All the poet says about the child is just what the priest would know—that she was under two years of age when she died and had not as yet learned the Pater Noster or Creed. Now, as Dr. Osgood notes (p. 73), giving sufficient illustration of his statement: "From Bede's time down the English clergy were instructed to see that the people, particularly the children, should know at least the Pater Noster and the Creed." Everything, it is evident, fits in admirably; and the picture of the lonely priest, whose comfort was drawn not from human loves and associations, but from the mercy of Christ and Mary and John, deprived by death of this little child who had become nearer and dearer to him than aunt or niece,—and whose loss he lamented "alone at night," is really quite moving. Perhaps, his only near relatives were worldlings, who thought little of living a life pure and undefiled, with an eye single to God's glory; and, lacking a child of his own, his heart

went out particularly to this little one whom he saw often as he passed to and fro from his dwelling, and undertook to teach the Paternoster and Creed.

It is perhaps hardly necessary for me to say that I do not think this sort of conjecture justifiable;¹ but I submit: it accounts for all the facts far better than any other hypothesis as to the personal element in the poem that has as yet been advanced. Disprove it, who can?

Here I should like to call attention to a fine modern poem by the Dorsetshire poet—William Barnes (1801-86):

MATER DOLOROSA.

I'd a dream to-night
 As I fell asleep.
 O! the touching sight
 Makes me still to weep:
 Of my little lad,
 Gone to leave me sad,
 Ay, the child I had,
 But was not to keep.

As in heaven high,
 I my child did seek,
 There in train came by
 Children fair and meek,
 Each in lily white,
 With a lamp alight;
 Each was clear to sight,
 But they did not speak.

¹ I recognize that the phrase “by stock or stone” is a common alliterative phrase and ought not to have its meaning forced. It is foolish to take passages out of their context or be too literal. Pearl in paradise is described as “stout and stiff” (779)! In Jerusalem they “stretch in the street” (971). Does the author’s remark, “I wist never where my pearl was gone,” indicate that he was an agnostic?

Then, a little sad,
Came my child in turn.
But the lamp he had,
O it did not burn!
He, to clear my doubt,
Said, half turn'd about,
'Your tears put it out;
Mother, never mourn.'

Could one find in small compass a more striking parallel to *The Pearl*—dream, vision, procession in heaven, conversation of dreamer with dead child, and the latter's counsel to the former to abandon unwise grief? The poem tingles with emotion, and would surely seem to be the outcome of a great personal loss. It has plainly more personal touches than *The Pearl*: "my little lad," "the child I had," "mother," etc. Did we know no more of Barnes than we know of the author of *The Pearl*, no one could prove that this poem was not autobiographical to the full. Had a sceptic as to the *necessity* of drawing such a conclusion ventured to dwell upon the fact that the fundamental conception of the lyric—that a mourner's tears cause sorrow to the departed—is a very old Teutonic idea, and may be found embodied in literature at least seven centuries earlier, in the poetic *Edda* in the touching poem concerning Sigrun and Helgi, as well as in such ballads as "The Unquiet Grave,"¹ etc., he would no doubt have been told that he was only a scholar and not a literary critic. But, as good luck would have it for our instruction, we know that the author was, not a "mourning mother," but a man, that he never lost a son, and that the poem was purely imaginative. Barnes's daughter, Lucy Baxter ("Leader

¹ See F. J. Child, *English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, Boston, 1886, II, 234 ff.

Scott" ¹), in writing the life of her father, chances to say that he "had heard the dream as happening to a friend of his daughter in the north of England." Barnes was a poet, who had many characteristics in common with the author of *The Pearl*; but of that we need not now speak. Nor need we dwell on the fact that the same legendary idea was handled similarly, within a few years after Barnes's poem appeared by several other writers in England, some of whom had had a personal loss.² The fact stands out definite and enlightening that this poem was in no wise "personal," though it bears far more appearance of being so than *The Pearl*.

I contended in my previous article that the poem was "not in the least elegiac or autobiographical as *hitherto regularly regarded by scholars and critics*." Obviously, this did not mean either: 1. that it was not partly in the form of an elegy; or 2. that it did not reveal in any way the *temperament*, the psychological experience, of the author. It did, however, mean that in my opinion, *to judge from the poem*, there was no likelihood that the author was lamenting the death of a little girl of his own, by name Margaret, or Marguerite, or Margery, which affliction was the great crisis in his life, deprived him of all zest for poetry, turned him to the study of divinity, and determined his later didacticism. The poem is openly an elegy, just as it is a dream, a vision, a debate, and a homily; but I can yet find no evidence whatever that it is elegiac "as *hitherto regularly regarded by scholars and critics*": it gives us no warrant for saying that the author was ever married at all, or ever had a child other than one of his own imagination.

¹ *Life of William Barnes, Poet and Philologist*, London, 1887, p. 242.

² See *Life*, above, p. 242.

Now, my critics have advanced no arguments in rebuttal of mine, to prove that the poem was genuinely elegiac or autobiographical. They have contented themselves with saying: "But it *might have been*; he cannot *prove* that it is not."

"And whoso seith of trouthe I varie,
Bid him preven the contrarie."

They have demanded, with a strange insistence, as if the burden of proof were on me and not on them, that I should demonstrate that what they read into the poem *could* not have been true, when, from the very nature of the case, such demonstration, as they well know, is impossible, unless the poet should rise from the dead to state the facts. Of course, I am not disposed to accept the challenge to prove that the author was a priest, that, if so, he had not been a married layman before he took orders, or that, again if so, he had not a daughter who died. I have no hesitation in avowing my complete ignorance on these points. The author *may* have been in one of a hundred positions before he wrote his poem. He may have had one or more wives before he took orders (if he ever did). He may have had one or more children, who died or did not die. Who on earth can tell? Yet, I repeat, it is certainly significant that he never once speaks of the child whom he *represents* himself as mourning as his own in the flesh, and he never gives the vaguest hint that he had ever been married. Everything he is believed to have written¹ seems to show that he was a holy man of singularly pure

¹ It is only a conjecture that he actually did write the four, or more, poems that are attributed to him. I have myself no doubt about his authorship of *Cleanness* and *Patience*; but there is much to be said against the attribution to him of *Gawain and the Green Knight*.

character who loathed unchastity, and that he was a trained theologian, who had a theological purpose (whatever else he may have had) in writing *The Pearl*. If we ask ourselves, as we are all human enough to have done more than once: "Did the author have any personal experience which led him to write the poem?" the only possible answer is: "We do not know." How can any mortal deny, when he does not even know what the poet's name or station or career were, that he never lost a child of his own or sorrowed for the loss of another's. The only thing we can say with confidence—but this is important—is that there is nothing in his poem to warrant any such assertion, and that everything points the other way. It is only throwing up dust to obscure the issue, to say: "This man, though or if a priest, *might* have married, therefore he *might* have had a child"—and then to clamor for proof that he did *not* have a child.

But my critics insist: "The poem is so full of personal feeling that the author *must* be voicing a personal grief. He is a gentle, sensitive man; he knows how a father would feel under the circumstances; he *must* have been married; he *must* have had a child—and, let there be an end to argument!" Timidly one might expostulate: "Why, he was a poet; and it is the business of a poet to 'body forth the forms of things unknown'; and poets have sometimes imagined characters that seem real though their creators never themselves outwardly lived through the experiences that they represent them as having had."¹ And

¹ Mr. Sidney Lee (*Elizabethan Sonnets*, I, p. lxxiv) quotes Minto's judgment concerning Lodge's sonnets: "There is a seeming artlessness in Lodge's sonnets, a winning directness, that constitutes a great part of their charm. They seem to be uttered through a clear and pure medium straight from the heart; their tender fragrance and music come from the heart itself"—whereupon Mr. Lee remarks:

one might also add in a whisper (for a few who might comprehend): "The very transcendental nature of the feelings presented in *The Pearl* is more likely to indicate the work of a poet who had longed for a relationship that he had never realized."

In any case, let the reader recall Charles Lamb and his "Dream Children: A Revery" ¹—where the confirmed bachelor in a dream sees his "little ones" gathered about him while he tells them "stories about their elders when *they* were children." Finally, he writes, "while I stood gazing, both the children gradually grew fainter to my view, receding, and still receding, till nothing at last but two mournful features were seen in the uttermost distance, which, without speech, strangely impressed upon me the effects of speech: 'We are not of Alice, nor of thee, nor are we children at all. The children of Alice called Bartrum father. We are nothing; less than nothing; and dreams. We are only what might have been, and must wait upon the tedious shores of Lethe millions of ages, before we have existence and a name.' And immediately awaking I found myself quietly seated in my armchair, where I had fallen asleep, with the faithful Bridget [his

"Facts require the substitution in this passage for the word 'heart' of the words 'French and Italian sonneteers.'"—Note further the way in which the author of *Licia*, writing to Lady Molineux "deprecates the notion that his book enshrines any episode in his own experience. He merely claims to follow the fashion, and to imitate the 'men of learning and great parts' of Italy, France, and England, who have already written 'poems and sonnets of love.' Most men, he explains, have some personal knowledge of the passion, but experience is not an essential preliminary to the penning of amorous verse. 'A man may write of love and not be in love, as well as of husbandry and not go to the plough, or of witches and be none, or of holiness and be flat profane'" (p. lxxxii).

¹ I am indebted to Professor Kittredge for suggesting this parallel.

sister Mary] unchanged by my side—but John L. (or James Elia) was gone for ever.”¹

Without question, the poem is full of human feeling. Far from denying this, I would proclaim, if necessary, from the housetop my own conviction that the poet was a man of strong and tender emotion, which he reveals as he was bound to do, as literary art demanded, in this poem for which he adopted in part the structure of an elegy. The poem throbs with the instinct of love and gentleness: it was natural to the poet and he had the art to make us feel it.

V.

It will be noticed that in this article I have not as yet discussed the question whether the author of *The Pearl* was an ecclesiastic or not—and this deliberately; for, despite my emphatic assertion to the contrary,² some of

¹ Compare also Lamb’s “Child Angel: A Dream”：“I chanced upon the prettiest, oddest, fantastical thing of a dream the other night, that you shall hear of. I had been reading the ‘Loves of the Angels,’ and went to bed with my head full of speculations suggested by that extraordinary legend

“I was suddenly transported, how or whither I could scarcely make out—but to some celestial region. It was not the real heaven neither—nor the downright Bible heaven—but a kind of fairy-land heaven, about which a poor human fancy may have leave to sport and air itself, I will hope, without presumption.

“Methought—what wild things dreams are!—I was present—at what would you imagine?—at an angel’s gossiping.

“Whence it came, or how it came, or who bid it come, or whether it came purely of its own head, neither you nor I know—but there lay, sure enough, wrapped in its little cloudy swaddling-bands—a child angel

“And a name was given to the babe angel, and it was to be called *Ge-Urania*, because its production was of earth and heaven.”

“Oh, the inexplicable simpleness of dreams”!

² See my article, pp. 157-8.

my critics¹ have seen fit to make it appear that my argument almost stood or fell according as the author, assuming that he was an ecclesiastic, might or might not have had a child; whereas that question is one quite apart. Let the author be proved a layman, and the autobiographical element in the poem remains just where it was—non-existent.

I shall not here undertake to combat Dr. Osgood's contention that the author of *The Pearl* was a layman. It is based on considerations in general too vague and intangible to be discussed briefly.² I would simply state my opinion that, "so far as I could sift him on that argument," it is entirely unconvincing. I would, at present, call attention to only one "indication" which Dr. Osgood

¹ Notably Mr. Coulton (*Mod. Lang. Review*, II, 39 ff.), who in a rather patronizing way explains that the "key" to my heterodoxy is due to "the demonstrably false conception of mediæval life" from which I started—a "central false idea." Mr. Coulton, however, accepts Dr. Carleton Brown's contention that he was an ecclesiastic. He writes as follows: "The premiss (that he was an ecclesiastic) is indeed extremely probable; though even here it is necessary to face the fact that Dr. Brown's arguments would also prove—if we had not happened to know the contrary—that Sir Thomas More was an ecclesiastic. Still the ecclesiastic status of the author of *Pearl* is perhaps the point which stands out with the nearest approach to certainty among all our uncertainties about him; and Professor Schofield is therefore justified in building upon so likely a hypothesis." Cf. Northup, *M. L. Notes*, XXII, 21: "Dr. Brown's argument is convincing."

² Moreover, Dr. Brown can do that better than I. Professor Golancz writes (*Camb. Hist.*, I, 330): "The intensely religious spirit of the poems, together with the knowledge they everywhere display of Holy Writ and Theology, lead one to infer that he was, *at first*, destined for the service of the church; probably, he became a "clerk," studying sacred and profane literature at a monastic school, or at one of the universities; and *he may have received the first tonsure only.*" Note the passages I have underlined—more intimations!

advances (p. li), that he was a layman. "It appears," he says, "in the decidedly unecclesiastical tone of his glorification of marriage at *Purity* [i. e., *Cleanness*,] 697-704." In the passage referred to, we read how God established for men the ordinance of marriage, which in Sodom had been "fouly set at nought."

"I compast hem a kynde crafte & kende hit hem derne,
& amed hit in myn ordenaunce oddely dere,
& dyȝt drwry þer-inne, doole alþer-swetttest,
& þe play of paramoreȝ I portrayed my seluen;
& made þer-to a maner myriest of oþer,
When two *true* togeder had tyȝed hem seluen,
Bytwene a mal & his make such merþe schulde conne (come?);
Wel nyȝe pure paradys moȝt preue no better,
Elleȝ þay moȝt *honestly* ayþer oþer welde" (697-705).

In a footnote at this point Dr. Osgood refers us to a work by Robert Mannyng of Brunne, "who was *probably* an ecclesiastic."¹ Inasmuch as we learn from Mannyng himself that he was a member of the Gilbertine Order of Monks and entered the Mother-house at Sempringham in 1288, Dr. Osgood might have said "certainly." Now this monk wrote as follows about marriage:

"Nothing Jesus Christ more quemeth (pleaseth)
Than love in wedlock where men it yemeth (guard);
Nor nothing is to man so dear,
As woman's love in good manner,
A good woman is man's bliss
Where her love right and steadfast is,
There is no solace under heaven
Of all that a man may neven (name)
That should a man so much glew (glee)
As a good woman that loveth *true*."

¹ On Mannyng, see my *Eng. Lit. from the Norman Conquest to Chaucer*, p. 361 and 412 ff., where the following passage is quoted.

There is striking similarity in the phraseology of this passage with that in *Cleanness*, and yet it was written by a monk! Who is to say when a passage has a “decidedly unecclesiastical tone”?

Evidently, a wrong attitude towards *The Pearl* has prevailed. Critics seem to have decided in advance, according to their inclination, that the most notable feature of the work consists in its being a strictly personal lament of a father for his own child, and have been more than willing to take a might-be in lieu of proof. Scholars who have demanded evidence have naturally pleaded an unpopular cause; but they have not allowed purely sentimental reasons to deter them from presenting the truth as they saw it. They believe that they write “in defence of *Pearl*” when they try to make clear the author’s intention in its composition, and endeavor to brush away the cob-web of misconception that conceals its real significance. Yet they are convinced that it is far more important for the average reader to consider the beauty and the meaning of the work itself rather than conjectures as to its manner of inception; just as they would prefer to have a friend dwell upon the spiritual insight and artistic skill revealed in the picture of a great Madonna than upon conjectures as to the painter’s patron and model.

If there are still those who think with Professor Golllancz that “the personal side of the poem is *clearly* marked, though the author nowhere directly refers to his fatherhood,” there is nothing further to say. Personally, my sight is so dim that what I seem to see most clearly about *The Pearl* is that it is the imaginative creation of a distinguished poet, who wrote so objectively that he has given no opportunity to those who desire to view the inner

secrets of his heart. Study the poem with the utmost care and one is bound to admit that the author does not reveal what one can be sure is a single "personal" experience of his natural life—even less than the almost contemporary author of *The Imitation of Christ*, who has so much in common with our poet. "Ama nesciri" is the mediæval motto both seem to have taken long ago; and, living nowadays, they would no doubt both wish to take it again, even did they hear of the tiresome discussions as to authorship, personal allusions and the like, which their works have aroused.

WILLIAM HENRY SCHOFIELD.